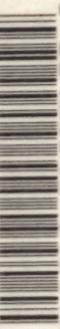


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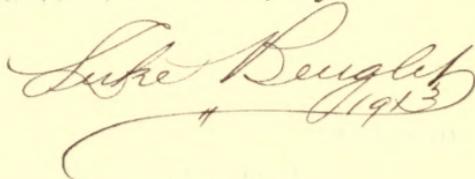
AN AID TO PRIESTS IN PREACHING FREQUENT
AND DAILY COMMUNION
ACCORDING TO THE DECREES OF H.H. PIUS X.

Translated from the French (Second Edition) of

PÈRE JULES LINTELO, S.J.

BY

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J.



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OUTRES PAGES
INFORMATIONS
1908

Ego JOSEPHUS DE VOS, Præpositus Provincialis Societatis Jesu in Belgio, potestate ad hoc mihi facta ab Admodum Reverendo Patre FRANCISCO XAVERIO WERNZ, ejusdem Societatis Præposito Generali, facultatem concedo, ut opus cui titulus "Triduum eucharistique et Instructions sur la Communion quotidienne, d'après les Décrets de Sa Sainteté Pie X.," 2^e édition, a Patre JULIO LINTELO sacerdote S.J., conscriptum, et a deputatis censoribus rite recognitum atque approbatum, typis mandetur.

In quorum fidem has litteras manu mea subscriptas et sigillo meo munitas dedi.

Bruxellis, die 13 Novembris, 1908.

J. DE VOS, S.J.

Imprimatur.

Tornaci, die 21 Novembris, 1908.

V. CANTINEAU, can. cens. lib.

Nihil obstat.

GUALTERUS STRAPPINI, S.J.,

F. TH. BERGH, O.S.B.,

CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur.

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,

VICARIUS GENERALIS.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 17 Maii, 1909.

JAN 27 1958

APPROBATION OF
THE AUTHOR'S EUCHARISTIC TRACTS
FROM HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
GENNARI, ON BEHALF OF
HIS HOLINESS PIUS X.

“ROME, *January 25, 1907.*”

“VERY REVEREND FATHER,

“I have presented to the Sovereign Pontiff copies of the little works on daily Communion which your Reverence has published for wholesale distribution.

“His Holiness accepts your tribute with the most lively pleasure. He highly commends your Reverence's zeal, and hopes that your works may obtain the widest possible circulation, above all in seminaries, religious institutes, and in educational establishments, that in these, especially, frequent and daily Communion may be urgently recommended according to the purport of the late general decree.

“Your Reverence's most devoted servant,

“CASIMIR, CARDINAL GENNARI.”

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL
V. VANNUPELLI AND THE AUTHOR'S
EUCCHARISTIC WORKS.

AT the Eucharistic Congress of Metz, 1907, after the reading, at the crowded priests' section, of Père Lintelò's paper, entitled, "The Decree on Daily Communion and the Duties of Preachers and Confessors," Mgr. Dubois, Bishop of Verdun, stated publicly that he was glad to announce that he had it from His Eminence the Cardinal Legate himself—who, moreover had requested him to repeat it in his name—that the Reverend Father Lintelò was the one whose writings most faithfully reflected the mind and wishes of the Holy Father—"Celui dont les écrits reflétaient le mieux les désires du Saint Père" (Report of the Congress, p. 670).

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE. ¹

PIUS X. has expressed his will that the priests of the Catholic Church should to their utmost further the "salutary practice" of frequent and daily Communion among the faithful. Moreover, the Vicar of Christ directs that this propaganda be continual and earnest. The faithful are to be exhorted to this constant, and even daily, recourse to the Bread of Life "frequently and with great zeal." The only question, therefore, remaining is: How can the desires of the Holy See be best carried into effect?

Two principal ways of promoting the practice among souls suggest themselves—namely, private direction in the confessional and public preaching. Or, to use the words of our author, Père Lintelo, "*gradual initiation* and the creation of a *general movement* by means of a special course of sermons, or, preferably, an Eucharistic Triduum."

Of these two methods, that of private guidance is by far the less effective. It will necessarily be chiefly

¹ Being, in more developed form, a speech made at the Westminster Eucharistic Congress, 1908, after the paper on Daily Communion, by the Rev. H. Lucas, S.J. In a highly condensed summary given in the Official Report of the Congress (*First Edition*), p. 236, the Translator is—by an oversight—represented as maintaining the "*necessity* and usefulness" of its Daily Communion. Except in a qualified sense, such an expression would have been an unwarranted exaggeration.

confined to the confessional, and it is an obvious impossibility for a confessor to give a full instruction on the Papal decrees to each penitent in turn. Moreover, he will have to contend with those difficulties which hamper the individual penitent, and arise from his sense of isolation. Among these difficulties are human respect and fear of singularity. The individual penitent will not realize that others are being privately indoctrinated in the same manner, and that he will not stand alone if he endeavour to carry out the confessor's recommendation.

By far the most effective method is public preaching. In fact, without it, there is little prospect of the "desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church" being realized on any considerable scale. The publicity given to the Eucharistic pronouncements of the Holy Father from the pulpit tends to create a public opinion in favour of the propriety of very frequent Communion. Thus the more timid will feel that, so far from being piously eccentric in adopting that practice, they are, on the contrary, doing that which even those who are not willing to follow suit must acknowledge to be quite correct and in accord with the mind of the Church.

But this preaching of Communion will make a deeper impression if it be given the form of a special Triduum, widely announced and advertised beforehand. This appears to be the best means of inaugurating a movement towards the adoption of frequent and daily Communion in a parish where the practice has not yet taken root.

Once the movement has been started, private direction becomes most important both for applying the principles laid down in the pulpit to the particular circumstances of the individual, and for encouraging

those who have taken up the practice to persevere fervently therein.

It is for aiding the priest in preaching frequent and daily Communion that the present work was penned by Père Lintelo. The usefulness of the work has been well proved, as well by the welcome it has received from the clergy as by the remarkable diffusion of frequent Communion to be witnessed in the author's native land—Belgium—towards which he has so largely contributed. In proof of these happy results we cannot do better than quote the following words of Cardinal Mercier, Primate of the Belgian Church: "Already in Belgium, an experience of two years, in the case of many parishes and most of our educational establishments, has proved that frequent Communion produces fruits of piety and morality which exceed the expectations of the most sanguine directors of souls."¹

It has been assumed above that the only question which a priest will ask himself is how he may best forward the wishes of the Pope. Yet such is the strength of long-standing habits of thought and prejudices in the present matter that some remarks upon the spirit in which the Papal decree *Sacra Tridentina* should be received will hardly appear unnecessary to anyone who notes the elementary condition of the Eucharistic movement amongst us, even in this, the fourth year since the appearance of the said decree.

Everything considered, it may be most useful, by way of preface to Père Lintelo's work, to say something as to the *attitude of mind* which a Catholic plainly ought to adopt towards the teaching and regulations

¹ Address of His Eminence Cardinal Mercier to the Pope, at the audience granted to the Belgium pilgrims, March 12, 1909.

of the thrice-blessed decree, *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*. Nor can we separate from that central document the important "Answer on the Communion of Children" ("De Communionem Puerorum") of September 15, 1906, in which the same Sacred Congregation of the Council maintains against doubters the full applicability of the original decree even to younger children, once they are duly admitted to their First Communion.

Our attitude of mind in the present matter can hardly be other than this: that we rule out of court all manner of doubts as to the *spiritual expediency* of promoting frequent and daily Communion, "frequently and with much zeal," as the decree directs, or of practising the same fervently, as far as outward circumstances permit. That we put away all those "vain fears" of which Leo XIII. spoke as deterring from Communion, and declared should be "wholly put aside" (*penitus tollendæ*).

Many difficulties and misgivings—there is question here only of religious, spiritual, or ascetical ones—may occur, and evidently do occur, to clerical and to lay minds. For example, our unworthiness, our backwardness in virtue, our ill-tamed passions, lapses into grievous sin, fear lest some may be led to receive sacrilegiously, a dread of evils commonly expressed by those very vague terms "want of reverence" and "over-familiarity," the danger of carelessness in preparation and thanksgiving, diminution of devotion in receiving, or, what is so constantly mistaken for this, mere dulness of the emotions and lack of sensible experiences, such as must almost inevitably result at times from habitual Communion, or any other daily religious exercise, daily celebration of Holy Mass not excepted, as priests may candidly admit.

That such difficulties should suggest themselves to

the most loyal, tending to prevent a frank and fearless adoption of the Papal exhortations, is, perhaps, only to be expected at first. For this "devout and salutary practice" of daily Communion for all alike, to which the Pope so strongly urges us, though it is not new in the Church, is new to us, with such Eucharistic up-bringing as most of us probably have had.

Even canonized Saints, whose spiritual writings are in our hands, have failed at times to realize to the full the blessed liberty of daily access to the Holy Table, which the Council of Trent desired, and which the doctrinal and disciplinary decree of Pius X. now declares to be the "desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church." And here, by the way, we receive a lesson of the utmost moment for us in these days of independent and restless thought—viz., that we Catholics depend for our safe religious guidance, not upon any private teacher or teachers, however learned or however saintly, but upon the Divinely assisted leading of the See of Peter.

The plain truth is that we have to *make a change*, many of us—a change of mentality, as Abbé Holeman expresses it, in a "Letter to a Fellow-Priest."

With us clergy it is a question of unlearning that former page of moral theology, "De Communionem Frequenti," with its antique graduated scale of frequency drawn up according to the particular degrees of holiness reached by individuals, and the "one day off," out of humility, even for those who, under the old régime, were "permitted," as the mistaken phrase was, to receive daily. With the laity it is a matter of shaking off prejudices of early (or perhaps lifelong) religious training which is not in conformity with the mind of Holy Church, as explained in the famous decree of 1905.

Now, there are two methods of dealing with such spiritual difficulties as have been above enumerated. One may treat them individually, taking each upon its own merits or demerits. But there is surely a far shorter, and even more Catholic, way of disposing of them.

Difficulties of the class referred to all concern the *spiritual expediency* of communicating frequently and daily, even assuming the two indispensable dispositions—the state of grace and a right intention—laid down in Article I. of the decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*. And this quite apart from the fact that the said difficulties are in themselves so very obvious, lie so much on the very surface of the matter, that no Catholic can reasonably suppose the Holy See to have lacked the wits to foresee them.

Now, it is just precisely this question of *expediency* that has already been authoritatively settled for us by the Vicar of Christ, the supreme Spiritual Director of us all, clergy and laity. Nay, the Holy See has done far more than declare the universal practice of even daily Communion to be expedient. Without issuing a precept such as appears to have existed at certain earlier periods of the Church's history, it nevertheless *strongly urges* us to it. There is, in its exhortations, an echo of that *compelle intrare* which appears in the Parable of the Great Supper, the passage assigned as the subject for preachers during the Corpus Christi Triduum. Since the great decree was issued, some eight or nine distinct Acts of the Holy See, of various kinds, have appeared, re-enforcing its earnest desire that the faithful should all communicate frequently and even daily, as far as their circumstances allow.

Our revered Archbishop of Westminster, in a

pastoral address of August 23, 1908, preparatory to the Westminster Congress, sounded the true keynote of that celebration when he said that it was one of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and loyalty to the Holy See; and during that Congress we pledged ourselves by acclamation to both. In no way can we better fulfil our pledge, and combine these two qualities, than by a frank, fervent, and fearless promotion of the Papal desires. If those desires are to take hold of the people it is perfectly clear that we must *preach* frequent Communion "frequently and with much zeal," as the decree requires, and not content ourselves with private spiritual direction, still less with a mild and somewhat fearful toleration of the practice.

Attention, then, to the voice of Peter, represented to-day by the voice of Pius, is one means of quieting our intellectual anxieties. It is perhaps the best way of all, since it rests upon a principle of our faith—full confidence in the Divinely aided guidance of the Apostolic See.

At the same time, it is lawful, and even useful, to deal with those difficulties on their own merits for the purpose of convincing ourselves that they have no foundation either in reason or in sound theology. It is not, however, proposed to do this here; and, indeed, this is unnecessary, for it has been done, and is still being done, very thoroughly in commentaries and writings on the subject by such authors of repute as Dom Pierre Sebastian, Prior Frassinetti, Antoni, and others, amongst whom we must not omit to mention our author, Père Jules Lintelo, whose reliability in the present matter received the remarkable testimony at Metz which stands recorded at the beginning of this book.

But though it is impossible to deal here with difficulties in detail, let me venture to submit one consideration which seems to solve fundamentally almost all spiritual and ascetical difficulties against facilitating, promoting, and adopting the wholesale practice of daily Communion.

The doctrinal and disciplinary decree *Sacra Tridantina Synodus*, which purports to put an end for good to all questions as to necessary conditions for even daily reception of Holy Communion, distinctly rules, in Article I., that even daily Communion is to be open to "*all the faithful*" (hence even to children who have been admitted to First Communion), "of whatever state or condition of life," upon two conditions only: (1) "The state of grace;" (2) "a right and pious intention," which intention, or *motive for receiving*, is to be understood, be it noticed, not in any private, rigoristic, or refined spiritual sense, but in the very moderate one explained in Article II.

Again, when dealing in Article V. with the relations between confessor and penitent regarding frequency of Communion, the decree warns the former "not to dissuade anyone" (*ne quemquam avertant*) who receives with the two said dispositions. These two very simple dispositions are, therefore, not merely *necessary*, but also *sufficient*, though still more perfect ones are obviously *desirable* and *better*. Necessary and sufficient for what? Clearly for a truly lawful, worthy, and, by theological consequence, *fruitful* Communion. A Communion, therefore, made under these two conditions can never be even venially wrong. It is, on the contrary, necessarily meritorious and profitable, whatever be its lack of ulterior improvements and perfections. By its grace must inevitably be increased *ex opere operato*, a Sacramental effect too commonly

underrated, while the worth of personal pieties, the *opus operantis*, is unduly magnified, and falsely made the qualifying test of a worthy Communion.

Now, it is the inference to be drawn from these principles involved in the decree that appears to remove comprehensively most, if not all, of the objections to frequent and daily Communion. This inference is that, given *these two necessary and sufficient conditions*—the state of grace and a right intention—it must *always* be more profitable for the soul to receive Communion, and never better to abstain, whenever Communion is to be had. On this point we have the following precise summing-up of Père Lintelo in the present work :

“(a) When these two dispositions are present (the state of grace and a right intention), Holy Communion is always fruitful. In no case does the Church induce her children to sin, nor urge them to an act harmful to their souls. Yet one would have to impute this enormity to her if the two dispositions which she requires were not, under every supposition (*en toute hypothèse*), sufficient to secure the fruit of the Sacrament and the good of souls.

“(b) Never is the omission of a Communion, that a person can make with this twofold disposition, in itself profitable, and this on account of the *ex opere operato* working of the Sacrament, which is by far superior to the merit of our good works. Better an imperfect Communion than to omit Communion” (p. 58).

Undoubtedly, taking the mass of Catholics as they are, if frequent and daily Communion obtains the widespread development plainly desired by the Holy See, it is morally certain that many incidental minor faults will be committed in the process—*e.g.*,

too little care in preparation or thanksgiving, in resisting distractions, side-thoughts of vanity, etc. But it is important to note once more that these minor faults by no means necessarily argue, whether in theory *or in practice*, a lack of substantial and predominant "right intention." We all of us frequently perform actions primarily for good motives, yet not without committing faults in the doing of them. Thus, for example, we defend our faith against calumnious attacks of the heretic out of a holy zeal for God's truth, yet perhaps we offend against charity by losing our temper over it, or we may incidentally yield to a self-complacent thought about our controversial talents.

Are we, then, to shrink nervously from facilitating, promoting, and adopting the "salutary practice" of frequent and daily Communion on account of such incidental faults and negligences, which, neither in theory nor in practice, at all necessarily imply a lack of predominant "right intention"? We certainly ought not to hesitate; we ought rather to be more determined on this very account. The Eucharist is proposed to us by supreme authority as the "Divine remedy" (*divinum pharmacum*) or physic for our passions. Now, all our actual faults proceed from these passions, as from their roots, *those faults consequently included* which we may commit in *the very use of Communion itself*. Plainly, then, the cure for these is not *abstention* from or rarer doses of the medicine, but rather a persistent use of this sovereign remedy for all our miseries instituted by the pitying and self-abasing love of the Sacred Heart of the Divine Physician. In instituting this remedy—as in His incarnation, life, and death—He vouchsafed to look *primarily* to our wretched neediness, and not primarily

to the protection of the honour and reverence which is infinitely His due. The question is not whether we ought to correct these venial faults and make ourselves less imperfect—of course we ought!—but the practical point is: *How shall we best get strength to do it?* Surely we cannot get it by availing ourselves less frequently of the Divine physic prescribed by Jesus Christ for their cure!

To forfeit, therefore, the rich and daily stores of grace and cleansing to be found in daily Communion, when obtainable, for the sake of receiving more rarely, but with some greater spiritual preparation, would be to sacrifice substantial good for accidental. As Père Lintelo wisely reminds us, there can be no comparison between the fruits of our good works (*opus operantis*) performed in the process of Communion and the Sacramental fruit of Christ's Body and Blood conferred *ex opere operato*—i.e., by the inherent efficacy of the Sacrament—upon a soul in grace.

As a last word, may the Translator be allowed to suggest, even to priestly readers, the supreme utility of carefully weighing every sentence and every expression of the Papal decree, and also the reasons urged *pro* the daily Communion of young children in the body of the "Responsium" which soon followed that decree? Herein we have a very compendium of theology concerning the use of the Holy Eucharist. Many, if not all, of the criticisms one hears or reads of produce the decided impression that the critics have not so far been at sufficient pains to master fully the principles contained in that document.

If, as the author reminds us, Our Lord promised that heroic religious, Sister Mary of the Divine Heart (Droste Zu Vischering), that He would give her an increase of heavenly glory each time she obtained for

Him, even indirectly, Sacramental access to a Christian soul, what reward may not priests expect for most directly bringing about frequent and daily Communion among numbers of souls committed to their care! It is by saturating, so to say, both young and old with Holy Communion that souls will be made proof against a rampant materialism which believes in nothing which it cannot detect with the senses, and against the increasing allurements of sensuality, for which, as theology teaches, Holy Communion is the specific remedy. In this way we shall be able to overturn the twofold tyranny of the senses which afflicts the times in which we live, and aims at crushing the supernatural life out of the souls of men.

P.S.—Father Lintelo's work has been faithfully reproduced without any material alteration. The translator's additions are always indicated.

F. M. DE ZULUETA, S.J

MOUNT ST. MARY'S COLLEGE,
NR. CHESTERFIELD,

Feast of St. Stanislaus Kostka, November 13, 1908.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

1. Reason for Publishing.—As soon as the decree of His Holiness Pope Pius X. on daily Communion appeared, certain zealous priests devoted themselves to instilling its teachings into the minds of the faithful. But, apart from their finding themselves at once in collision with the ancient prejudices of many of these, the task in itself did not always prove an easy one, on their own side. Thence arose a desire on their part to have at hand materials for instructions in harmony with the Papal directions. This desire became all the greater as soon as the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences had urged the holding of Eucharistic Triduums.

Providence having allowed me to be engaged more particularly in this kind of apostolate, I have been asked more than once to make public, for the use of priests, that which experience had taught me to be useful for so many souls. I now comply with that request.

2. The Nature of the Task.—The object to be kept in view is to aid the solid instruction of the Christian people. It has been my endeavour to bear this in mind by providing materials for discourses rather than developed addresses, and aiming at clear-

ness and persuasiveness rather than at brilliancy of style. The preacher is left to choose his exordium, perorations, and illustrations for himself, of a kind to suit his own character, his audience, and the circumstances of the case. Sometimes I shall address myself to the priest, calling his attention to some line of argument or some particular way of presenting the same; at other times forms of speech will be suggested to be addressed immediately to the people themselves. It should also be borne in mind that this is no theological dissertation, nor a set treatise for priests, but, on the contrary, a handbook designed to assist them in the work of explaining to the people the doctrine to be found in treatises.

3. Choice of Material.—Since the purpose of these Triduums is to lead the faithful to more frequent Communion, it is imperative that the *motives* calculated to move them to this practice should be lucidly set forth. The decree lays most stress upon “the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church.” Further, one must explain clearly the necessary dispositions, and show that these do not lie beyond the reach of a good will. Then, too, it is important to lay bare the pretexts and answer the objections which still keep back so many souls. Even though only three opportunities for preaching should occur during a Triduum, all these points should be dealt with in the discourses.

As the Triduum is in future to be renewed each year, it will be desirable to vary the matter, making use of the extra subjects which have been added to those that seemed essential.

With audiences, either better educated or more favourably disposed towards the practice of very frequent Communion, great fruit may be obtained by delivering a complete course of instructions on that

subject. Then one would develop at greater length the headings of subjects suggested in these pages.

4. **Documents Quoted.**—It has seemed useful for the convenience of readers to reproduce those documents which will be more frequently made use of—namely, the decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* of December 20, 1905, which will often be alluded to as the “decree”; the “Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Rites prescribing the Triduum”; and the “Instructions for Priests belonging to the Priests’ Eucharistic League.”¹ For the same end, ideas will in certain places be found couched in terms more or less identical with those employed by me in other publications. Let me refer my readers to my “Appeal to Men” (“Appel aux Hommes”) for the refutation of certain objections.

5. **Bibliographical Hints.**—The present instructions are so drawn up as to enable the priest to profit by them without having to consult other works for the purpose of preparation. All the same, such consultations will be highly useful, both for finding the theological proofs of the principles here laid down before the laity, and also in order that some fuller development or some different way of presenting the same thought may give the priest himself a firmer grasp of his subject.

¹ To these the Translator has thought well to add a translation of that part of the Rescript of September 15, 1906, which deals with “The Communion of Children”—a document well deserving the study of all who would fain be even half as zealous for the innocence of Catholic childhood as modern hygiene is for its mere physical culture.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

GLORY and thanksgiving be to the Divine Heart of Jesus for the blessing it has deigned to bestow upon the author's humble efforts! The fact that more than 3,000 copies have been disposed of in a few months, and that kindly praise has been accorded to the work in numerous ecclesiastical and religious reviews, gives ground for hoping that these pages have supplied a need, and have been productive of some good. This new edition has been considerably enlarged: several chapters are entirely new; others have been touched up and perfected.

Regret had been expressed that the subject of the "Effects of Communion" had not been dealt with. The omission was intentional, on account of the particular end held in view. Moreover, that topic is to be found thoroughly explained in Catechisms, and with regard to it the decree of Pius X. found no errors needing correction. At the same time, the author acknowledges that the point should be dwelt upon in the Catholic pulpit more frequently than it is, and accordingly he now defers to the wish expressed to him.

WORKS MOST FREQUENTLY QUOTED AND
RECOMMENDED TO ALL PRIESTS.

Rev. Père Tesnière : Commentary on the Decree. 30 c.

Cros, S.J. : Enfants à la Sainte Table. Bruxelles : De Wit. 2 francs.

Frassinetti : Le Banquet de l'Amour Divin. 1 fr. 25 c. (Written before the appearance of the decree, yet all but perfectly in accord with it, one or two very slight deviations being corrected in footnotes by the editor, Rev. Père Couet, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.)

Antoni. See English list on p. xxiv.

Rev. Père Barbe, S.J. : La Communion Quotidienne. 48 pp., 32mo. 15 c. Namur : Picard - Balon ; Reims : Lefèvre. The "right intention" specially dealt with.

SUPPLEMENTARY WORKS.

DOCTRINAL.—*Rev. Père Tesnière* : Somme de la Prédication Eucharistique. 6 vols. in 18mo., sold separately. Contents : The Names, Figures, and Prophecies of the Eucharist—Holy Communion : the Nature and Effects of Communion—The Practice of Holy Communion—The Heart of Jesus Christ. 2 vols.

(The volume entitled "The Practice of Holy Communion" will prove specially useful. As it appeared before the decree, it still contains some small restrictions which the author desires to see altered in harmony with the Roman decree.)

Falconi : Notre Pain Quotidien. 2 francs.

ASCETICAL.—*Ven. Père Eymard* :¹ The Divine Eucharist. 4 vols., 18mo. ; The Months of the Blessed Sacrament, etc.

¹ Founder of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, whose cause of beatification has been introduced.

Abbé Mahieu : Le Pain de Vie. 300 pp., 18mo. Bruges : Beyaert. 2 francs.

Lejeune, Canon : Vers la Vie Eucharistique. 90 pp., 18mo. Paris : Lethielleux.

FOR WORKING CLUBS.—*Abbé H. Hello* : Le Décret sur la Communion quotidienne appliqué aux Œuvres ouvrières. 15 c. Casterman.

N.B.—Works having no publisher's name attached are all to be had at : Librairie Eucharistique, 205, Chaussée de Wavre, Bruxelles; and 12, Rue de Toulouse, Tourcoing (Nord), France.

ENGLISH WORKS (ORIGINAL OR TRANSLATED).

A. CHEAPER PUBLICATIONS.—*Lintclo, Jules, S.J.* : Frequent and Daily Communion. *Ditto*, For Sodalists of Our Lady. *Ditto*, For Children of Mary. *Ditto*, For Junior Sodalists of Our Lady. All the above edited by Father Elder Mullan, S.J. Price 5 cents; 4.00 dollars per 100. New York : P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 5, Barclay Street.

By same author : To Christian Youth. Price 2d. Calcutta : M. Apel, Catholic Orphans' Press.

Frequent and Daily Communion for Children. Translated by E Leahy. Dublin : *Messenger Office*.

Antoni : Vain Fears that keep you from Frequent Communion with Our Lord. Price 6d. Angelus Co., Norwood. Revised since decree.

Macdonnell, Jos., S.J. : Daily Communion. Price 1d. Dublin : *Messenger Office*.

Roche, W., S.J. : For Frequent Communicants (devotional). Price 3d. and 6d. London : Manresa Press, Roehampton, S.W.

de Zulueta, F. M., S.J. : Frequent and Daily Communion. Price 1d. London : Catholic Truth Society, 69, Southwark Bridge Road, S.E

Notes on Daily Communion. 2nd edition. Price 6d. (paper), 1s. (bound). London: Washbourne and Co., Paternoster Row.

Parents and Communions of Children. Price 1d. Edinburgh: Sands and Co., Hanover Street. London: Bedford Street, W.C.

Frequent and Daily Communion even for Men. Price 1d. Sands and Co.

E. Leahy: Communion for Children. Translated from Père Lintelo. Price 1d. Dublin: *Messenger* Office.

Acts and Decrees. Price 1d. Washbourne and Co.

Message from the Sacred Heart to the Heart of the Priest. Norwood: Angelus Co. Price 2s. per 100. Leaflet, having high ecclesiastical approval. Translated into various European languages. Centre of propaganda: Notre Dame de Luxembourg, Bertrix, Belgium.

B. LARGER WORKS.—*Devine, A., C.P.*: Frequent and Daily Communion. Price 2s. London: Washbourne and Co.

de Zulueta, F. M., S.J.: The Ministry of Daily Communion. For priests. Price 1s. 6d. Washbourne and Co.

The Spouse of Christ and Daily Communion. For religious. Price 1s. Sands and Co.

The Eucharistic Triduum. Translated from Père Lintelo. Handbook for Priests. Price 1s. 6d. Washbourne and Co.

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SPANISH WORKS.

J. B. Ferreres, S.J.: La Communion Frecuente y Diaria. Barcelona: Gili. 1 peseta (or 1 franc).

PART I.

DOCUMENTS AND PRACTICAL METHODS.

DECREE OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF THE COUNCIL ON RECEIVING DAILY THE MOST HOLY EUCCHARIST.

THE Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace which are offered to the faithful who receive the Most Holy Eucharist, makes the following declaration: "The holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. XXII., cap. 6). Which words declare plainly enough the wish of the Church that all Christians should be daily nourished by this heavenly banquet, and should derive therefrom abundant fruit for their sanctification.

And this wish of the Council is in entire agreement with that desire wherewith Christ Our Lord was inflamed when He instituted this Divine Sacrament. For He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the necessity of eating His Flesh and drinking His Blood frequently, especially in these words: "This is the bread that cometh down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are

dead: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (John vi. 59). Now, from this comparison of the food of angels with bread and with the manna, it was easily to be understood by His disciples that, as the body is daily nourished with bread, and as the Hebrews were daily nourished with manna in the desert, so the Christian soul might daily partake of this heavenly bread, and be refreshed thereby. Moreover, whereas in the Lord's Prayer we are bidden to ask for "our daily bread," the holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food.

Moreover, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end, that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to Our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (St. Augustine, Sermon. 57 in St. Matth., "De Orat. Dom.," N. 7). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins" (Sess. XIII., cap. 2).

This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians that they daily flocked to the Holy Table as to a source of life and strength. "They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking

of bread (Acts ii. 42). And that this practice was continued into later ages, not without great fruit of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness.

But when in later times piety grew cold, and more especially under the influence of the plague of Jansenism, disputes began to arise concerning the dispositions with which it was proper to receive Communion frequently or daily; and writers vied with one another in imposing more and more stringent conditions as necessary to be fulfilled. The result of such disputes was that very few were considered worthy to communicate daily, and to derive from this most healing Sacrament its more abundant fruits, the rest being content to partake of it once a year, or once a month, or at the utmost weekly. Nay, to such a pitch was rigorism carried that whole classes of persons were excluded from a frequent approach to the Holy Table; for instance, those who were engaged in trade, or even *those who were living in the state of matrimony*.

Others, however, went to the opposite extreme. Under the persuasion that daily Communion was a Divine precept, and in order that no day might pass without the reception of the Sacrament, besides other practices contrary to the approved usage of the Church, they held that the Holy Eucharist ought to be received, and in fact administered it, even on Good Friday.

Under these circumstances the Holy See did not fail in its duty of vigilance, for by a decree of this Sacred Congregation, which begins with the words *Cum ad aures*, issued on February 12, A.D. 1679, with the approbation of Innocent XI., it condemned these errors, and put a stop to such abuses, at the same time declaring that all the faithful of whatsoever class—

merchants or tradesmen or married persons not excepted—might be admitted to frequent Communion, according to the devotion of each one and the judgment of his confessor. And on December 7, 1690, by the decree of Pope Alexander VIII., *Sanctissimus Dominus*, the proposition of Baius, postulating a perfectly pure love of God, without any admixture of defect, as requisite on the part of those who wished to approach the Holy Table, was condemned.

Yet the poison of Jansenism, which, under the pretext of showing due honour and reverence to the Holy Eucharist, had infected the minds even of good men, did not entirely disappear. The controversy as to the dispositions requisite for the lawful and laudable frequentation of the Sacrament survived the declarations of the Holy See; so much so, indeed, that certain theologians of good repute judged that daily Communion should be allowed to the faithful ones in rare cases, and under many conditions.

On the other hand, there were not wanting men of learning and piety who more readily granted permission for this practice, so salutary and so pleasing to God. In accordance with the teaching of the Fathers, they maintained that there was no precept of the Church which prescribed more perfect dispositions in the case of daily than of weekly or monthly Communion; while the good effects of daily Communion would, they alleged, be far more abundant than those of Communion received weekly or monthly.

In our own day the controversy has been carried on with increased warmth, and not without bitterness, so that the minds of confessors and the consciences of the faithful have been disturbed, to the no small detriment of Christian piety and devotion. Accordingly, certain distinguished men, themselves pastors of souls,

have urgently besought His Holiness Pope Pius X. to deign to settle, by his supreme authority, the question concerning the dispositions requisite for daily Communion; so that this usage, so salutary and so pleasing to God, might not only suffer no decrease among the faithful, but might rather be promoted and everywhere propagated—a thing most desirable in these days, when religion and the Catholic faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters. And His Holiness, being most earnestly desirous, out of his abundant solicitude and zeal, that the faithful should be invited to partake of the sacred banquet as often as possible, and even daily, and should profit to the utmost by its fruits, committed the aforesaid question to this Sacred Congregation, to be looked into and decided once for all (*definiendum*).

Accordingly, the Sacred Congregation of the Council, in a Plenary Session held on December 16, 1905, submitted the whole matter to a very careful scrutiny; and, after sedulously examining the reasons adduced on either side, determined and declared as follows:

1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

3. Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless, it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future; and, if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto.

4. But whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties.

5. That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade anyone (*ne quemquam acertant*) from frequent and daily Communion, provided that he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention.

6. But since it is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly sustained, the soul more richly endowed with virtues, and an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed on the recipient, therefore parish priests, confessors, and preachers—in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism (Part II., cap. 4, N. 60)—are frequently, and with great zeal, to

exhort the faithful to this devout and salutary practice.

7. Frequent and daily Communion is to be promoted, especially in religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds; with regard to which, however, the decree *Quemadmodum*, issued on December 17, 1890, by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, is to remain in force. It is also to be promoted especially in ecclesiastical seminaries, where students are preparing for the service of the altar; as also in all Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth.

8. In the case of religious institutes, whether of solemn or simple vows, in whose rules, or constitutions, or calendars Communion is assigned to certain fixed days, such regulations are to be regarded as *directive* and not *preceptive*. In such cases the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a minimum, and not as setting a limit to the devotion of the religious. Therefore, freedom of access to the Eucharistic table, whether more frequently or daily, must always be allowed them, according to the principles above laid down in this decree. And in order that all religious of both sexes may clearly understand the provisions of this decree, the Superior of each house is to see that it is read in community, in the vernacular, every year within the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi.

9. Finally, after the publication of this decree, all ecclesiastical writers are to cease from contentious controversies concerning the dispositions requisite for frequent and daily Communion.

All this having been reported to His Holiness Pope Pius X. by the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation in an audience held on December 17,

1905, His Holiness ratified and confirmed the present decree and ordered it to be published, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. He further ordered that it should be sent to all local ordinaries and regular prelates, to be communicated by them to their respective seminaries, parishes, religious institutes, and priests; and that in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes they should inform the Holy See concerning the execution of the matters therein determined.

Given at Rome, the 20th day of December, 1905.

✠ VINCENT, CARD. BISHOP OF PALESTRINA,
Prefect.

L. ✠ S.

CAJETAN DE LAI, *Secretary.*

DAILY COMMUNION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

CHIEF PASSAGES CONTAINED IN THE ANSWER OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF THE COUNCIL, SEPTEMBER 15, 1906.¹

Two doubts had been presented to the Holy See for solution—one concerning the Communion of the sick who were not dangerously ill, which doubt was finally dealt with by the later decrees of December 7, 1906, and March 25, 1907; the other doubt was concerning the application of the decree *Sacra Tridantina Synodus* on “Daily Communion” to younger children.

The question put in their regard was: “*Ought daily Communion to be recommended in establishments for the education of the young, even to all children whatsoever, after they have received their first Communion?*”

The answer—given *verbatim* at the end of these extracts—is decidedly affirmative, and any opposite practice is condemned.

The *Acta S. Sedis* for October, 1906, after stating the doubt, gives at length the reasons for and against, as debated by the Sacred Congregation:

“The reasons in favour of restricting children are

¹ Added by the Translator.

usually set forth as follows: They (the children) do not seem as yet possessed of sufficient mental discretion for worthily and fruitfully receiving the Most Holy Body of Christ frequently. Moreover, since their attention is readily absorbed in sensible and external objects, and they are more easily drawn aside from the contemplation of Divine mysteries, they too frequently approach the Holy Eucharist without due preparation and thanksgiving, thus exposing the Sacrament to disrespect.

“Now, as Cardinal Bellarmine (*De Sacram. Euchar.*, lib. iv., cap. 23) teaches, ‘of two evils one must always chose the lesser; but it is a smaller evil for men to go without some benefit that is not necessary to them than to expose God’s Sacrament to manifest risk of irreverence.’ Hence, in a case where children have no absolute need of Communion, and, on the other hand, it cannot be given to them without disrespect, it seems more advisable that it should be denied to them.

“Add to this that, through praising daily Communion too highly, one may foster hypocrisy in children, who, influenced by reverential fear of authority, may fall deeper and deeper into sins of sacrilege. Thus, although Tarino (*Il libro del buon pastore*) advises a rector of an ecclesiastical seminary to recommend a frequent recourse to the Sacraments in a general way, he adds nevertheless: ‘But be very cautious about telling any individual to go oftener to Communion: for your words might be the cause of sacrilege and hypocrisy.’ Moreover, Innocent XI., in his Bull *Cum ad aures*, February 12, 1679, when giving the rules for allowing daily Communion, teaches that the matter must be decided according to the purity of consciences, the fruit seen to result from frequency, and the progress made in

piety. None of these things are easily to be found in children, who, agitated by strong passions, are disturbed by doubts of conscience, fall at least into venial sins, and show little or no increase of piety."

Two technical objections, based upon the term *ephebeis*, occurring in Article 7 of the original decree, are next recited. The document then continues:

"But, on the other hand, there are no less weighty reasons in favour of the frequent Communion of children. First of all, the discipline of several ancient Churches stands on their side, according to which the Sacrament of the Eucharist was administered even to infants, as Cardinal Bona¹ fully proves. In those days it was customary for all who had been baptized—whether adults or infants—to be at the same time nourished with the Eucharistic Bread. And although this usage was in course of time abandoned, it is by no means to be blamed, since the Council of Trent itself declares: 'Nor is antiquity to be condemned on account of having observed this practice in certain places.' And rightly; for, as Bellarmine remarks (*loc. cit.*, lib. i., c. 7), 'by their baptism infants acquire a right to receive the Eucharist.' Hence it was that in the first ages of the Church the children stood in front of the Holy Table, and received Communion next after the clerics; also, if many fragments of the Blessed Sacrament remained over, the priests called up innocent children to consume them, as the same Cardinal Bona establishes by several proofs. Consequently, there is no reason why this frequent, and even daily, Communion should not be specially recommended to children in our own times.

"And this all the more, because it is absolutely necessary that children should become imbued with

¹ " *Rever. Liturg.*," lib. ii., cap. 19, N. 2.

Christ before their passions get the start of them, and that they may thus have the strength to repel with greater energy the assaults of the devil, the flesh, and of other internal and external foes."

On this point we read the following words in that golden book, the "Imitation of Christ": "For the senses of a man are inclined to evil from his youth; and, except the Divine medicine come to his aid, a man soon sinks into a worse state. . . . Holy Communion, therefore, restrains us from evil, and strengthens us in good." For the Eucharist is one of the Sacraments of the New Law which confer both sanctifying and sacramental grace *ex opere operato*, as long as they meet with no obstacle in the recipient. And we should not expect to find any greater hindrance *ex opere operantis* in children than in adults. For, besides the fact that, in the case of children, ignorance is compensated for by innocence, their thoughtlessness and giddiness ought not to be unduly pressed to their disadvantage.

Hence De Ségur ("La Sainte Communion") says, amongst other things: "Children may and ought to communicate frequently, just as much as adults. Our Lord does not require from them more than they are capable of giving Him, and He understands this thoughtlessness which alarms us; but He knows equally, and far better than we do, that innocence is the most precious of all treasures, that Satan seeks to rob them of it early, and that Communion alone can protect them from the wiles of the enemy. . . . For communicating well, it is enough to receive Our Saviour with a good will. And this children will have, just as much as adults; and experience shows that sincerity of the most genuine kind is to be found in the good will of a child that has made its first Communion. It loves Jesus Christ; it desires to have

Him; then why not give Him to the child? Very often the child is more fit to receive Him than ourselves, who undervalue its piety. Thoughtlessness is no obstacle to Communion unless it be wilful. . . . Children are giddy. Yes, but they are good and loving; and just on account of their need to love it is necessary to give love its proper nourishment. We must cause them to love Jesus Christ, and, for this end, place them frequently in closest intimacy with Him. Their faults, however real they may be, have little consistency, and it is precisely this pious practice—*i.e.*, frequent Communion—which prevents these faults from becoming vices.’

“Only in this way,” continues the Congregation, “can that word of our Lord obtain fulfilment: ‘Suffer little children to come to Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ The kingdom of heaven on earth is no other than the Eucharist, which was instituted for the preservation and increase of the spiritual life.

“What the mind of the Church is on this point, particularly at the present day, clearly appears from a letter of March 12, 1866, in which, by the express command of Pius IX., Cardinal Antonelli, the Secretary of State, arouses the attention and solicitude of the French Bishops, in order that they may pursue the right course as to admitting children frequently to the Sacraments. He writes: ‘That even after admitting them [young children] to the Eucharistic table for the first time, some are accustomed to keep them away from it for a long period, forbidding them, as is done in some places, to receive Communion at Easter in the year immediately following upon their first Communion. Finally, that there are some seminaries, even, in which the custom obtains of keeping young students from the Sacrament of the Altar during

several months, on the plea of awaiting riper preparation.

“‘Knowing well the immense importance of frequent reception of the Sacraments for protecting and maintaining the innocence of children; knowing, too, that constant use of the Sacraments tends most wonderfully towards nourishing and strengthening nascent piety in the hearts of the young, leading them to embrace with fervour the practices of our holy religion, the Holy Father, in his desire to see altered a system so mistaken and so injurious to the spiritual interests of young children, has charged me to call your Lordships’ attention to this abuse in order to arrive at reforming this faulty system for supplying the spiritual needs of children in a sense more conformable to the spirit and discipline of the Church.’

“The same conclusion may be gathered, both from the decree issued by this Sacred Congregation, December 20, 1905, in which frequent and daily Communion is recommended to *all the faithful*, and from two other decrees, already recorded, from the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, by which, on this ground, special indulgences and privileges are granted to *all the faithful* without distinction.

* * * * *

“From all of which considerations it is rightly to be inferred that a daily reception of the Eucharist should be strongly recommended, not merely to adults, but also to children.”

The formal resolution of the Sacred Congregation upon the Communion of children runs as follows:

“That frequent¹ reception of Communion, in ac-

¹ From the absence, at this point, of the additional words “and daily,” some have argued that the Congregation here suggests a lesser degree of frequency for younger children. Were this interpretation

cordance with Article 1 of the decree [*i.e.*, On Daily Communion], is recommended even to children, who, when once admitted to the Holy Table according to the rules laid down in the Roman Catechism, chap. iv., N. 63, ought not to be hindered, but, on the contrary, exhorted thereto, the contrary practice anywhere prevailing being condemned."

admitted, its only effect would be to make the Resolution self-contradictory on account of the words "in accordance with Article 1 of the decree." For, in Article 1, "frequent *and daily* Communion" is to "be open to *all* the faithful." Children who have even made their first Communion are presumably to be numbered among the faithful! Hence, in the said resolution, the Sacred Congregation is using "frequent" in its general sense, and as including the *highest degree* of frequency—*viz.*, *daily* reception.

YEARLY TRIDUUM OF PRAYER
FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROMOTING FREQUENT
COMMUNION.

LETTER OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION OF INDUL-
GENCES TO THE BISHOPS, DATED APRIL 10, 1907.

“MY LORD,

“How lively has been the satisfaction and joy with which pious Catholics have welcomed the decree on Daily Communion, promulgated on December 20, 1905, by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, is shown most strikingly by the many letters addressed to the Holy See from all parts of the world. From these letters it is evident that in many places this devout and salutary practice of daily Communion has begun to bear abundant fruits, and promises to produce yet more plentiful ones in the future among the Christian people. This is but natural. For, amid the widespread decline of piety, clearly no more efficacious remedy can be conceived for healing the languor of Christian souls, and for arousing them more powerfully to make to God a return of love, than frequent and even daily Communion, in which we receive Him Who is the fount of infinite Charity.

“For this reason the Sovereign Pontiff, while greatly rejoicing in the salutary graces hitherto

obtained, earnestly desires their maintenance and continual increase from day to day. On this account, he charges me with the duty of exhorting your Lordship, and all the Bishops of the Catholic world, to follow up the work that has been begun, and to strive your utmost (*omnem impendant operam*) that the faithful may receive the Holy Eucharist more frequently, and even daily; for it is by means of this Divine banquet that their supernatural life is constantly fed and made to flourish.

Moreover, being persuaded that it will conduce greatly to the desired end if the Christian people do sweet violence to God by means of earnest and united prayer, the Holy Father desires that in each year, if possible, a Triduum of prayer, after the method given below, be held in all cathedral churches during the octave of the Feast of Corpus Christi; or, if local or personal circumstances call for a different arrangement, at some other time of the year to be appointed by their Lordships the Bishops.

1. The devotions should always take place on the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday immediately following the solemn Feast of Corpus Christi, or at some other time, as stated above. On each of the days there shall be a sermon in which the people are to be instructed upon the surpassing excellence of the ineffable Sacrament of the Eucharist, and especially upon the dispositions of soul needed for its due reception.

After this, let the Most Holy Eucharist be exposed, and the following prayer recited before it:

“O most sweet Jesus, Who didst come into this world to enrich the souls of all mankind with the life of Thy grace, and Who, to preserve and sustain this life in them, dost daily give Thyself in the most august Sacrament of the Eucharist, as a saving medi-

cine to heal their infirmities and a Divine food to support their weakness, we pray and beseech Thee to pour forth upon them most graciously Thy holy spirit, so that, being filled therewith, any who are in mortal sin may, by returning to Thee, be restored to the life of grace which they have lost ; and that those who, by Thy great mercy, already serve Thee may daily, as far as each one is able, come devoutly to Thy heavenly banquet, and in the strength thereof may find a remedy for their daily venial faults and a support of the life of Thy grace, and, thus becoming more and more cleansed from sin, may obtain the everlasting happiness of heaven. Amen.”¹

Then, after the hymn *Tantum Ergo* has been sung, Benediction is to be given to the people.

2. On the morning of the Sunday—which will be the last day of the devotions—the parochial Mass will be celebrated as usual, and, after a homiletic sermon on the Gospel for the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi, which is excellently adapted for discoursing upon the mystery of the Eucharist, the faithful will receive Communion in a body. Should another Sunday, outside the said octave, be chosen, then, in place of a homily upon the Gospel of the day, let some sermon be preached by means of which the people may be moved to receive Communion during the Mass in question with greater fervour.

In the afternoon, the same ceremonies as those performed on the previous days are to be repeated. In their discourses, preachers will exhort the faithful to more ardent devotion towards the Most Holy Sacrament, and particularly to partaking more frequently of the heavenly banquet, in conformity with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism, as

¹ To be had in leaflet form from Orphans' Press, Rochdale, Lancashire. 1s. per 100.

intimated in the above-mentioned decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, under Section VI. Further, the *Te Deum* is to precede the singing of the *Tantum Ergo*.

But, in order that it may be thoroughly understood by all how earnestly the Sovereign Pontiff desires the spread of more frequent Communion, he strongly recommends that also in all churches to which the care of souls is attached (*curialibus etiam templis*), and subject to the wise and prudent judgment of each Bishop, the same pious exercises shall at least be held on the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi as are appointed above for cathedral churches. And in order that the faithful may more readily take part in these devotions, Our Most Holy Lord has granted the following indulgences, applicable to the souls in Purgatory, viz. :

(1) An indulgence of *seven years and seven quarantines* for each day of the Triduum. (2) A *plenary indulgence* once during the Triduum, the day being left to each one's choice, on the conditions that people shall attend the Triduum on any one of the days, and, after expiating their sins by Sacramental Confession, shall receive Holy Communion, and pray according to the intentions of His Holiness. (3) A *plenary indulgence* obtainable *on the Sunday* by all who, after Confession, take part in the General Communion, either in cathedrals or in the other churches, and who pray as above specified.

In the meantime I pray, etc.

Given at Rome, at the Secretariate of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences and Holy Relics, etc., April 10, 1907.

S. CARD. CRETONI, *Prefect.*

✠ D. PANICI, ARCHBISHOP of LAODICEA, *Secretary.*

INSTRUCTION

GIVEN TO MEMBERS OF THE PRIESTS' EUCHARISTIC LEAGUE, FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE PIOUS PRACTICE OF DAILY COMMUNION, AND APPROVED BY PIUS X.¹

IN presenting this Instruction the original text has been preserved. The only liberty the author has taken, with a special view to the Eucharistic Triduum,

¹ The league for priests here referred to is the one established at San Claudio, Rome, July 27, 1906, by the authority of the then Cardinal Vicar—Cardinal Respighi—under the title of “*Lega Sacerdotale Eucharistica*,” a distinct organization from that of “The Priest Adorers” (*Prêtres Adorateurs*). But as the latter body came to be called in America “The Eucharistic League,” in England, in order to save confusion, it has become the practice to refer to the “*Lega Sacerdotale*” as “Priests’ Communion League,” or “Priests’ Daily Communion League.” The centre of this Archconfraternity is 160 Via del Pozzello, Roma. The Directors for Great Britain and Ireland are: Rev. M. P. Hanlon, St. Mary Magdalen’s, Brighton, Sussex (*ad interim*); Rev. T. N. Taylor, St. Peter’s College, New Kilpatrick, Glasgow; and Rev. T. Watters, St. John’s, Blackrock, Dublin. For Canada: Rev. E. Galtier, S.S.S., 490, Mount Royal Avenue, Montreal. For United States: Rev. E. Poirier, S.S.S., East 76th Street, New York City. These are General Directors. Besides, each archdiocese and diocese has its local director. For these numerous names and addresses, see *Emmanuel*, the official monthly of the Priests’ Eucharistic League (Priest Adorers) and the Priests’ Communion League, to be had at the Central Direction, 205, Chaussée de Wavre, Brussels, Belgium, or at the General Directions above named. More about this league will be found in “Ministry of Daily Communion” by the translator.—*T.*

is to rearrange the order of the paragraphs, and to give them headings showing their purport.

The Triduum is Recommended.—In order to succeed the better in spreading the practice of daily Communion in their parishes, priests should avail themselves of the first opportunity for giving, or causing to be given, by some zealous preacher, a retreat of at least three days' duration (N. 8).

Plan of the Triduum.—The following plan for the Triduum is suggested :

In the Meditation and Instruction on the *first* day, the preacher would speak of the malice, effects, and punishments of mortal sin, and of the truly pitiable plight of poor sinners, exhorting these earnestly to be reconciled to God.

In the Meditation and Instruction on the *second* day, he might speak of the great mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ, particularly in instituting Sacramental Confession; he could show the necessity of Confession for those who are conscious of mortal sin, instruct the people how to make it well, inviting all to cleanse their souls in the Blood of Jesus Christ by means of Sacramental Absolution.

Finally, the Meditation and Instruction on the *third* day should be devoted to the Divine Eucharist, and the subject developed on the lines traced in Article I. (N. 9).

Closing of Triduum.—The three days being ended, on the following morning, which, for preference, should be a feast-day, the preacher will take occasion from the General Communion, which is certain to be a large one, to exhort the faithful in a fervent address to see that this General Communion be not an isolated event, but that it be repeated with greater or less frequency, according to the circumstances of the

population. He should urge them to renew this Communion every day of the year, but especially on Sundays, and on those feast-days when Mass is of obligation (N. 10).

On the day of the General Communion, in the afternoon, when the last discourse has been delivered, and the Blessed Sacrament exposed, the priest will recite the prayer "For the spread of the devout practice of daily Communion";¹ then he will distribute copies of it to all the faithful present, and urge them to recite it every day after Holy Communion, and also at home—*e.g.*, after the family recital of the Rosary (N. 11).

After the Triduum.—The use of daily Communion having thus been inaugurated in parishes, priests should exert themselves, in order that it may take still deeper root, by often—very often—making very short, but very urgent, exhortations to the people when they assemble to hear Mass, inviting them to partake of the Divine Victim. They should attend faithfully in their confessionals at the disposal of penitents, persuading those to communicate whom they find well disposed, *and doing their best to excite the proper dispositions in those who lack them* (N. 12).²

Sermons on Holy Communion.—Parish priests, and priests generally, who have the care of souls, once they have become members of the league, will apply themselves to explaining to the people the *nature* of the Eucharist; *when, in what way, and with what love, and for what purposes*, Our Lord instituted the same;

¹ This prayer differs very slightly from the one first issued by Pius X., February, 1905.

² The translator has taken the liberty of italicizing these words, as containing an important lesson. Few will need to be sent away for lack of necessary dispositions if a little pains be taken with them by the confessor.

what are its *effects*, whether considered as a Sacrifice, as the abiding Real Presence of God in our midst, or, above all, as the food of our souls (N. 1).

Since many fail to frequent the Eucharistic table on account of certain *prejudices* and *vain fears*, priests belonging to the league will not content themselves with exposing the great benefits of daily Communion: they will strive, besides, to dispel these *prejudices* and *vain fears*, persuading the faithful that, for lawfully receiving every day, nothing more is required than for receiving lawfully every week or every year—that is to say, *only the state of grace* and a *right intention*—though, of course, it is desirable that those who practise frequent and daily Communion should be free from venial sins—at least those of a fully deliberate kind—and from affection for such sins (N. 2).

Moreover, they will caution the faithful from time to time that they have no cause to be disturbed because in pious books, even though written by Saints, other dispositions are declared *necessary*, over and above the two exacted by the decree. For these authors wrote at a time when the Holy See had not yet settled the question concerning the dispositions needed for receiving every day.

Other Means.—In pursuit of this end, they will endeavour to procure the widest possible diffusion for pamphlets which encourage the practice of daily Communion in conformity with the aforesaid decree (N. 3).

As it is impossible to spread widely the pious use of daily Communion in places where the practice of attending daily Mass has not first been propagated, they will earnestly and frequently exhort the people to assist every day at the unbloody Sacrifice; they will instruct them with ever-increasing thoroughness

upon its value, excellence, and necessity, and will teach them practical methods for assisting at it in a fitting manner (N. 5).

For this purpose they will try to spread widecast the admirable little work of St. Leonard of Port-Maurice, entitled "The Hidden Treasure of Holy Mass" (N. 6).

In order that the people may flock to Mass in greater numbers, parish priests, and those in charge of souls, should take care to have the church bells rung and—even at the cost of some inconvenience—celebrate Mass at the hour most convenient for the congregation, taking into account the season of the year and the employments of the population (N. 7).

The Children.—They will take particular pains to excite a lively desire for daily Communion in the hearts of children, which are innocent and free from *vain fears*, when preparing them for First Communion as soon as they are capable, and as far as possible get them to renew this desire day by day (N. 13).

TO PRIESTS.

1. **Their Duty.**—"Parish Priests are bound, in virtue of their pastoral office, to exhort the faithful frequently to take as much care to nourish their souls daily with this Sacrament as they deem it necessary to bestow upon securing material bread for the nourishment of their bodies. For *it is evident* that the soul has no less need of food than the body. And it will be extremely useful for winning over their hearers if preachers recall to their minds the immense, and wholly Divine, benefits which flow from Holy Communion. Let them discourse, in particular, upon that miraculous and prophetic bread—the manna—

with which the Israelites were obliged to nourish themselves each day, and give authorities from the writings of the Fathers—those powerful advocates of frequent reception of this Sacrament. For it was not St. Augustine alone who expressed the sentiment: ‘Since you sin daily, partake daily of the antidote to sin.’ If anyone will examine into the matter he will find that it conveys the mind of all those Fathers who have treated of Holy Communion” (Roman Catechism, Part II., chap. iv., N. 54).

This passage from the Catechism of the Council of Trent is referred to in several documents of Pius X. relating to daily Communion.

Let us add the following words taken from the same Catechism, N. 39: “There is, in fact, *no class of the faithful* to whom the knowledge of all that can be said of the wonderful power and fruits of this Sacrament *is not easily accessible and at the same time most necessary.*”

2. Is every Pastor bound to procure Daily Communion amongst his Flock as far as possible?—

“The inability to communicate under which many of the faithful labour, if it be involuntary, is a misfortune—a distressing poverty which should move the compassion and zeal of pastors to diminish the same to the best of their power. If it be voluntary, and due to contempt for the Divine Bread and indifference to salvation, it is an evil to be combated without respite, and with a zeal that should become the more intense in proportion to the outrage inflicted by such contempt upon the Heart of Him Whose loving designs the priest professes to forward. A universal aloofness from daily Communion can never be viewed as a good state of things, nor even calmly acquiesced in. At best, it can be borne as being, it is true, a lesser

misfortune or evil than profanation of the Sacred Bread; yet one that is to be pursued without a truce by means of illuminating instruction, zealous exhortation, and even by warnings as to the sad effects which follow from it. It is a case of recalling the command of St. Paul to Timothy: 'Preach the good word, be instant in season and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine'"¹ (Tesnière, "Pratique," p. 49).

3. **An Appeal.**—"Priests and brethren, it is we who are the providers of the banquet of Divine Love: for the Bread which came down from heaven has willed to place Itself in our hands. It is our office, our duty, to invite the guests—that is to say, all the faithful: and not merely to invite them, but to use a loving violence with them in order that they may sit down to table.

"This banquet is not reserved for a certain time, nor for some special feast: it is a daily banquet. We wish it to be such for our own selves. So let us not be more severe with the faithful—

"*Than was Jesus Christ, Who expelled from the banquet only the man who had not on the wedding garment;*

"*Than the Holy Fathers of the Church, who, beyond all question, are the best masters of the spiritual life;*

"*Than we are with ourselves, by exacting from the laity a higher degree of preparation and a greater holiness of life than we are content with in our own case for celebrating Holy Mass*" (Frassinetti, "Le Banquet," p. 169).

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

PRACTICAL HINTS

FOR SECURING A MORE SUCCESSFUL TRIDUUM.

A. Before the Triduum.—1. Let the priest convince himself of the importance of this preaching, and then, as the "Letter" of the Sacred Congregation of Rites has it, "he will strive his utmost" to make it a complete success.

The Pope is not pursuing a chimera. For that very reason he desires that the memory of the decree be annually revived, and that efforts should be multiplied for getting it reduced to practice. The fact that this final goal may not be attainable at one bound, or in fullest perfection, is no reason for losing sight of it.

While the preaching of the great truths is intended for awakening the conscience and inspiring a horror for sin, the preaching of Communion is designed to secure perseverance and supply the strength needed for avoiding sin.

Moreover, one need not wonder if, as experience has more than once proved, it produces still more solid and lasting results.

Let the priest pray, besides counting upon the blessing attached to obedience and upon the promise of the Sacred Heart.

2. *The faithful must be prepared* for the Triduum, and for this (a) the Triduum should be *announced*

beforehand as about to be held in deference to the express wishes of His Holiness and the direction of their Lordships the Bishops: the indulgences attached to the religious exercises should be notified; (b) a widespread distribution of the text of the "Prayer for the spread of daily Communion" — people should be induced to recite it together in their homes; (c) an appeal to the various parish organizations (Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, Guilds, etc.), in order to bespeak their attendance at the Instructions, and to arouse their eagerness to set an example in receiving Holy Communion.

B. During the Triduum.—1. In the matter of ceremonial, the priest should take his cue from the "Letter" (Sacred Congregation of Rites) and the recommendations contained in the Instructions to Priests.

2. Explain to the people clearly the *purpose* of the Triduum. That purpose is not to render *any* sort of homage to God in the Eucharist, but definitely to enter upon the path traced by the Sovereign Pontiff, and to bring the Christian people to the practice of more frequent and, in the case of those who are able, even of daily Communion. Far from veiling this purpose from the people, we must make them fully aware of it. This stands out clearly in the wording of the "Letter." They must be made to understand that a change has to be effected, not in the teaching of the Church, but, as will surely be necessary in the case of some, in their ideas and practical conduct.¹

3. One must not forget that the Pope relies upon the effect of that *united prayer* which Our Lord declares

¹ "We have to change our notions, our sentiments, our *mentality* on the subject of the Holy Eucharist" (a published letter "to a fellow-priest," by Abbé Holemans.)

to be so powerful. We should have the prescribed "Prayer" recited aloud by all together, and excite a really fervent desire to secure so precious a grace. We must not expect to reap this fruit merely by our eloquence or cleverness.

4. It would seem that our instructions ought to be simple in their character, catechetical, and persuasive. Considerations on the infinite love manifested by Our Lord in the Eucharist should be made to rest principally on the basis of *an intelligent appreciation as to the designs of the Sacred Heart*.

5. Let it be the aim of *confessors* to make the faithful draw for themselves the final conclusions which result from what they have heard preached, dispel their misgivings, stimulate their generosity, and obtain from each one that measure of Eucharistic practice which is possible in his case.

6. The present forms a most suitable opportunity for distributing the actual text of the decree¹ to the more educated, and Eucharistic treatises, pamphlets, and leaflets to everyone.²

¹ See "Acts and Decrees." R. & T. Washbourne. 1d.

² See list of English publications, p. xxiv.

ROME'S "MOT D'ORDRE."¹

This chapter affords matter for an instruction preparatory to the Triduum, or might serve as an exposition of the emphatic desire of the Church for frequent and daily Communion.

THE object of these discourses, dear brethren, is to help you to understand more clearly *the reason why* we are urged to communicate frequently, and why we should strive to reach as nearly as possible to the goal set before our generosity—namely, a *daily* reception of Holy Communion.

The first of all reasons for those who profess the faith of Jesus Christ and are docile under the guidance of the Church is undoubtedly the fact that *the Sovereign Pontiff desires it*. This reason renders any other superfluous, and we should argue with ourselves as follows: Since I cannot make any deep or special study of this religious question any more than I can of others, my best plan is to be guided simply by what Our Lord tells me through the voice of His Vicar on earth. The Pope is favoured with special light for instructing me in the path of duty, so I run no risk of straying while submitting my judgment to his; whereas I may easily be misled by my private and personal views. Herein I shall be copying the trustfulness of the little child, who does what its parents

¹ See translator's Appendix, p. 211.

wish just because they wish it, and who feels sure, in consequence, that it is the best thing to do.

Unfortunately, there are many Christian men and women who do not so reason, and, in practice, do not scruple to set up in opposition their own personal notions of a more or less erroneous character, while at the same time claiming to be dutiful and obedient children of the Holy Father and of the Church.

And yet, when a specialist — an astronomer, a chemist, or an architect—gives his judgment upon some point within his own domain, people bow readily to his decision. Now, the Pope is not only a specialist in theology, but is the Chief Ruler, invested with authority. We are bound to obey him, and to conform our ideas and conduct in spiritual things to the ideas and conduct which he proposes to us. Nevertheless, though the Sovereign Pontiff would be pleased that we should obey him in all things after the manner of little children, he does not forbid us to seek out the reasons which have decided him to urge us on to daily Communion, for he himself is at pains to point them out to us.

Your obedience will be all the more hearty in proportion as you grasp these reasons more firmly, and it will be the purpose of these discourses to instruct you more thoroughly about them.

It is a matter of first importance to realize *the authoritative value* of the decree on Daily Communion, and the insistence with which Pius X. continually presses for its execution.

A. Importance and Authority of the Document.

“As the decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council on Daily Communion has been solemnly

promulgated by the command of the Sovereign Pontiff, it becomes, therefore, a legislative Act passed by the universal legislator, and the whole Church is bound to obey it. . . . All teaching opposed to what it declares to be that of the Church regarding the practice of daily Communion must be withdrawn, and be silent henceforth; every custom or practice opposed to what it ordains must cease."¹

Here are some declarations made by Cardinal Vannutelli, the dignitary who signed the decree, and Papal Legate, in his opening speech at the Eucharistic Congress at Tournai, August 16, 1906:

"It is competent authority that speaks concerning frequent access to the Holy Table. . . . This great pontifical Act, so maturely considered, and so seasonably promulgated, *is at one and the same time both doctrinal and disciplinary.*"

Under these circumstances, theologians declare that Catholics are bound in conscience to yield to the decree "an interior assent of the mind, even though the decree have not the character of a final judgment that is of its own nature unalterable. . . . To refuse that assent would be to sin by rashness."² If infallibility has not spoken, *authority*, at least, has.

The Cardinal, moreover, boldly proclaimed the duty of everyone:

"All of you, illustrious members of the Episcopate, civil magistrates, presidents of organizations, priests, religious, laity—Catholics here present—you have all fully understood, as I am glad to bear witness, the duty incumbent upon this Congress—the first assembled since the decree was issued. That duty

¹ Tesnière, "Commentary," p. 16.

² Choupin, S.J., "Valeur des décisions du Saint-Siège." Paris: Beauchesne.

can be no other than gratefully to take action upon the same, to welcome it with reverence, to hail it with enthusiasm, and make it henceforward the *watchword* to be woven upon our banner for a beneficent propaganda, and to serve as a symbol of the perfect union which should reign in future amongst all Catholics.

"The decree of December 20 [1905] is, in truth, like a rainbow appearing in the firmament of the Church as a sign that the squall has blown over, and that the Heart of Jesus—the Heart of the King of Peace in the Eucharist—resumes His undivided empire over souls, even as, in Nature, after a storm, the sun once more freely diffuses light and heat."

B. Acts and Decrees of His Holiness Pope Pius X. for Promoting Frequent and Daily Communion.

During the space of two years decrees or answers, urgent and precise, have followed one another rapidly, like the blows of a hammer, and have been accentuated by symptoms of an invincible determination to pursue the object in view.

Here is the list of them :

May 30, 1905.—On the eve of the Eucharistic Congress at Rome, Pius X. indulgenced a "Prayer for the spread of the pious practice of Daily Communion," the text of which was published and distributed on the closing day of the Congress.¹

June 4, 1905.—The Holy Father decided to close the Eucharistic Congress at Rome in person. The

¹ Two other prayers for the same object have been indulgenced by Pius X. One, dated June 26, 1906, addressed to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament; the other for the association of "Notre Dame du Saint Sacrement," January 26, 1907.

following passage is taken from his allocution: "I beg and beseech of you all that you recommend the faithful to receive the Divine Sacrament. And I address myself in a special manner to you, my dear sons, who are priests, in order that Jesus, the richest Treasure of paradise, the greatest Good ever possessed by poor, forlorn humanity, may not be abandoned in so injurious and thankless a manner."

December 20, 1905.—Decree concerning the frequent and daily reception of the Holy Eucharist. This is the first in importance. It opens with a rapid historical sketch, full of nerve and precision; then, in eight short paragraphs, we have some perfectly clear rules, or answers. There are none of those periods, or forms of speech, which may possess a certain literary charm, but are very hot-beds of controversy, or of glosses which tend to weaken the force of a document; and, as a conclusion, an absolute forbiddance of contentious disputes concerning the dispositions required for frequent and daily Communion. Articles 1 and 2 are to be adhered to strictly:

"1. Frequent and daily Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, should be open to all the faithful, of whatever rank and condition of life; so that no one who is in the state of grace, and who approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can lawfully be hindered therefrom.

"2. A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects."

February 14, 1906.—Those who receive Communion

at least five times in the week are able to gain plenary indulgences, even though they go to Confession only once a fortnight, or once a month, or even less often—for the decree puts no limit.

August 10, 1906.—The brief *Romanorum Pontificum* approves and enriches with indulgences and extraordinary privileges the Priests' Eucharistic League (*Lega Sacerdotale Eucharistica*),¹ instituted for the special object of "bringing the faithful to the practice of frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist."

By a favour without precedent, confessors enrolled in this league can impart to those of their penitents who are accustomed to communicate daily, or nearly so, a *plenary indulgence* once a week.

August 16, 1906.—Cardinal V. Vannutelli, delegated by the Pope, declared at Tournai that the great Papal act was "the fruit, the victory, the triumph of the Eucharistic Congresses," and that it should serve as a guide in all their undertakings.

September 15, 1906.—The decree of December 20, 1905, is to be applied not only to grown-up people or to the youth of either sex, but to children besides, once they have made their first Communion according to the rules of the Roman Catechism. That Catechism allows them to make it as soon as they have sufficient discretion. Every contrary practice that may anywhere prevail is condemned.²

¹ See footnote, p. 20.

² The following is the passage to which the answer of the Sacred Congregation of the Council refers: "As for the age at which the Sacred Mysteries are to be given to children, none can better decide than the father and the priest to whom they make their confessions; to these (the parents of the child and the confessor) it belongs to ascertain by examining the children whether these have arrived at some understanding (*cognitionem aliquam*) and have some appreciation of this admirable Sacrament."

December 7, 1906.—Sick people who have been laid up for a month, without any sure prospect of speedy convalescence, are allowed to receive the Holy Eucharist, although they have taken some nourishment since midnight *per modum potus* (after the manner of drinking); and that once or twice a week, if the Blessed Sacrament be kept in the house; if not, once or twice a month. (It has been explained that such things as chocolate, tapioca, semolina, soup containing bread-crumbs, are covered by the expression *per modum potus*.)¹

March 25, 1907.—The preceding decree is extended to those who, though seriously ill, are obliged, or able, to leave their beds at times during the day.

April 10, 1907.—Bishops are desired to have celebrated yearly in their cathedrals a special Triduum, for the object of exhorting the faithful to frequent Communion. In parish churches one day of religious exercises may be regarded as sufficient. Special indulgences granted.

May 8, 1907.—General leave given to distribute Holy Communion in private oratories to all those who attend Mass—"saving parochial rights"—which means except in the case of the Easter Communion and Viaticum.

[Notice: the *parents and the confessor* jointly, but not, therefore, on a footing of equality; not the parent *in opposition* to the formed judgment of the priest. For it is the priest, and not the parent, who is the final judge in case of doubt, since he is the person responsible for the administration of Sacraments. "Let a man so account of us as of . . . the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1).—*T.*] On this highly important question as to the age for first Communion, see Cros, S.J., "Le Confesseur de l'Enfance"; Besson, S.J., "Admission to First Communion, and the Right of Parish Priests," in *Revue Théologique*, October, 1908 (Tournai: Casterman).

¹ Obviously, tea, coffee, cocoa, and the like, are equally included.—*T.*

July 14, 1907.—A brief once more appointing Cardinal V. Vannutelli Papal Legate to the Congress of Metz, which was wholly dedicated to the subject of Holy Communion. "Here," says the brief, "we surely have the shortest way towards procuring the salvation of each person in particular, as well as of society." And the Cardinal, in closing the Congress, congratulated it upon having been "the faithful, docile, and unflinching echo of the Decree on Daily Communion."

Conclusion.—Thus has His Holiness Pope Pius X. in the past four years of his Pontificate heaped act upon act to make the Catholic world understand that—to quote the letter addressed to the Legate for the occasion of the Metz Congress—"the centre of Christian life, and, so to say, the soul of the Church, is found in the Eucharist."¹

¹ The numbers of the review *Le Très Saint Sacrement* (Tourcoing Nord, 12, rue de Toulouse) for January and February, 1908, contain an article by the Very Rev. E. Couet, director of the Priests' League, summarizing and discussing the various Acts of Pope Pius X. in honour of the Holy Eucharist. We have already referred elsewhere to "Acts and Decrees": R. and T. Washbourne.

PART II.

INSTRUCTIONS.

THE DESIRE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“ He Himself more than once, and in no ambiguous terms, pointed out the *necessity* of eating His flesh and drinking His blood *frequently*” (Decree).¹

Preliminary Observation.—Our Lord’s desire is in the form of an invitation, not of a command.

Our Lord might have bound us to daily Communion: He has not done so. Why? Because—

(a) He foresaw the real hindrances for a large number of his followers: sickness, distance from church, the will of others, urgent duties of people’s state, scruples of conscience, etc.

(b) The general spirit of the Gospel is not one of coercion, but of appeal to generosity and confidence: “Come to Me, all of ye!”

But though there is no obligation, it is not less true on that account that daily Communion is plainly intended—that there is an urgent invitation to it.

¹ “*Crebro manducandi*” (*Latin text*).—*T.*

FIRST PROOF (OF OUR LORD'S DESIRE).

HIS CHOICE OF THE FORM OF "BREAD."

1. Our Lord, the Master of all Nature, could have chosen for the purpose of transubstantiation, and as a means of abiding amongst men, any other substance—a diamond, light, a flower. . . .

He has not selected any *striking* substance . . . in order that all our worship might go out to Him alone; nor a *permanent* substance . . . but one that is consumed, thus showing that His chief object was not to be adored, but to be eaten.¹ Jesus hides Himself under the semblance of bread. But bread calls not so much for a *monstrance* as for a *mouth*. The main desire of our God is to give Himself to us as *food*.

2. Then, it is no dainty or luxury, but *bread*, that He has chosen . . . a food that is common, easily obtained, of *daily* use. Bread is not considered a treat for anyone, or a reward for merit. It is the support of everyone, and for every day.

3. From this selection, we can *conclude*, according to the analogy between the effects of Sacraments and the material substances assigned to them :

(a) The work allotted to the Eucharist will be, in the case of the soul, like that of bread in the case of the body.

(b) Like bread, it must be offered to *all, every day*.²

¹ (*cf.* "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me" (John vi.).—*T.*)

² "Thirdly, the effect of this Sacrament may be viewed according to the manner in which it is given, it being given after the manner of food and drink. And therefore every effect which material food and drink

4. In support of these conclusions, we have:

(a) That most formal declaration of Our Lord Himself: *Caro enim mea vere est cibus. . . . Ego sum panis vita.*¹

(b) The interpretation of the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "It is part of the duty of the parish priest frequently to exhort the faithful not to neglect the nourishment and support of their souls, even as they deem it needful to give material nourishment to their bodies; for *it is evident* that the soul has no less need of spiritual food than the body has of material."

5. And, indeed, when a person speaks of *eating and nourishment*, he suggests the notion of a *daily* process. This is common to all peoples and to every period of life. The rules of alimentation are that it be taken each day, or at least often enough for its effect to be felt continuously, and in a degree proportioned, both in quality and quantity, to the waste of strength that has to be repaired.

Is not Our Lord's desire sufficiently pronounced?

SECOND PROOF.

THE "MANNA," AS A TYPE.

1. We must first notice that we are dealing here, not with a mere comparison, but with a Scriptural figure or type—*i.e.*, with an event in Jewish history which made known beforehand something that was to be verified in the Church.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the "manna" is

produces upon our bodily life—namely, sustaining, increasing, repairing, and delighting—all these effects are produced by this Sacrament in regard to our spiritual life" (St. Thomas, IIIa, q. 79, art. I. *in corp.*).

¹ John vi. 56 : 35.

even the chief among types of the Eucharist (*præcipua figura Eucharistiæ*). It throws a conspicuous light upon its nature, its effects, and virtually teaches us the rules governing its reception. Everything about this type is traced upon the lines of the future reality.

2. We will recall the *circumstances* in which the miracle of the "manna" took place.

(a) *Before* the miracle: After the departure from Egypt, journey through the desert, regrets for the meats and onions of Egypt. The prayer of Moses. The divine answer: *Manè videbitis gloriam Dei*.

(b) *During it*: The phenomenon itself . . . like a hoar-frost covering the land. . . Wonderment. . . The Israelites taste the substance: they find much relish in it, and feel themselves reinvigorated. It was the food sent them by God. The next day the same marvel is repeated, and the day after, and so the miracle occurs every day for the space of forty years!

(c) *After*: *Remembrance* of the greatest wonder wrought by God in favour of His people. They sang about it in their psalms. A measure of "manna" was deposited in the Ark of the Covenant by Divine command. *Hope* also. According to rabbinical teaching, as Moses was a type of the Messiah, the latter was to renew with increased splendour all the wonders of Moses, particularly that of the "manna."¹ *This may explain the hostility borne by the Jews towards the Eucharist.*

3. **The Promise of the Eucharist.**

(a) *Challenge of the Jews to Our Lord*: "What sign, therefore, dost Thou show that we may see and may believe Thee? . . . Our Fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written: *He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*" This was a direct challenge concerning the

¹ See Fillion, on John vi. 31.

great sign of the Messiah. Our Lord takes it up: The bread from heaven? "Moses gave you not bread from heaven: but my Father giveth you the *true* bread from heaven. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven . . . the bread that I will give is My flesh. . . ."

(b) *Here there is question of the true body of Jesus.* Our Saviour's words can bear but one meaning—that, in the Eucharist, their expectation regarding the manna will be realized; that He intends to give His flesh to be eaten daily by His disciples, even as God daily fed the children of Israel by means of that miraculous food. And the Jews well understood Him to mean this; but the thing appeared the height of extravagance to them. Their limited intelligences, unable even to explain how it is that a single grain of wheat can multiply itself into a hundred more, refuse to bow before the intelligence, power, and love of the God Who speaks to them! Our Lord, far from deceiving them, more than once repeats that His flesh is to be given for the life of the world, that its reception is to be an indispensable condition for life. There is no possibility of mistaking the desire of His Heart. All generations of Christians wonder and adore! The poor and lowly servant feeds upon his Lord (*Manducat Dominum pauper servus et humilis*)!

4. **Rules for Eating the Manna.**—Each day the manna fell from the heavens in sufficient quantity, and each day the Jews had to gather it. If any of it remained over from the previous day, it corrupted. On the Sabbath the manna fell not, and on the eve of that day alone they gathered a double supply. Not a day was to pass on which they were not to eat of it.

5. **Application.**—What a wonderful type! The desert through which we are journeying is this life,

with its miseries and barrenness; the manna is Jesus Christ, Who wishes to refresh us daily. We are all of us invited to partake of it each morning, before plunging into the distracting cares of our daily occupations. . . . Could a more convincing argument be found for proving "the desire of Jesus Christ" to see us feeding upon it every day?

Those Jews who through slothfulness failed to collect the manna did but punish themselves thereby, being robbed for that day of their support, their vigour, and their comfort.

Our Lord, Who gave us a bread so marvellously suited to our needs, so full of virtue and of heavenly benefits, cannot but wish that His children—once they have reached the years of discretion—should bestir themselves in order to gather up each morning this bread which falls from heaven. If they abstain from it through indifference or sloth—and not through inability or *bona-fide* ignorance—they will experience a gradual exhaustion of their spiritual strength.

Reading.—Tesnière, "The Practice of Communion." Third Conference: The Manna.

THIRD PROOF.

THE PETITION OF THE "OUR FATHER."

"Give us this day our daily bread."

1. Does this Passage really refer to Communion?

Let us listen to the decree: "The Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by these words must be understood, not so much that material bread which is the support of the body, as the Eucharistic bread which ought to be our daily food."

This is certainly the *traditional* interpretation of the

petition, and tradition rests upon the teaching of the Apostles and of Our Lord Himself. On closer examination, we find the Fathers divided into two classes: some of them say that the Eucharist is here alluded to *exclusively*, and others say *chiefly*, which suffices for our present point. The former of these views, however, advocated by St. Jerome, appears to be the more probable one.

2. Reasons.—(a) The *Pater Noster* is something more than a prayer of the creature to his Creator—it is one which the Christian, the child of God, united to Him by grace, addresses to his Father. Our Lord composed the prayer expressly for his use, and calls his attention to the fact: “Thus shall you pray.” Furthermore, all the petitions of the “Our Father”—*e.g.*, “hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,” etc.—are connected with the life of the soul, and concern the Christian as such. Now, that anxiety of a purely material kind regarding bread for the body would seem somewhat out of place in the midst of these requests for favours of a supernatural character. It is the bread of children that we ask for, that bread of which the liturgy says that “it should not be thrown out to dogs.”¹

(b) In several passages of the Gospel, Our Lord urges His disciples not to be over-solicitous about what concerns the body: “Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. . . . Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you.”²

“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for

¹ *Non mittendus canibus* (“Lauda Sion,” by St. Thomas Aquinas). See Matt. xv. 26.—7.

² Matt. vi. 25, 33.

that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you.”¹

It is true that we also depend for our material bread upon God.—Yet, after He has assured us that we hold a favoured position in His Providence with regard to this matter, there would seem to be a certain contradiction in His making us ask for it so frequently. On the other hand, the excellence of the Eucharist is so great as to make it fitting that we should ask for it in preference to all other natural or supernatural goods.

3. Points to be Noticed.—(a) We are to ask for this bread *for each day*. “Our Saviour has such a desire to dwell within us, returning to us day by day,” says St. Hilary, “that He commands us to ask for it each day in our daily prayer.” “If this bread be ‘daily,’” says St. Ambrose, “why do you partake of it less frequently?”

(b) If the advice, given by ascetical writers, that we make “spiritual” Communions be excellent, Our Lord has Himself provided for the practice in the “Lord’s Prayer.” Let us make a point of entering into His intentions when reciting that prayer.

Reading.—Tesièrre, *Pratique de la Communion*, chap. i. “The Eucharistic meanings of the fourth petition in the *Pater*.” The quotations given above will be found there, along with several others.²

¹ John vi. 27.

² For the Eucharistic interpretation of “our daily bread,” the reader is referred to a more thorough dissertation which will soon appear in print. We select from it the following interesting conclusions: Among the Latin Fathers not one is to be found who, interpreting the said petition, confines its application exclusively to material bread. Only three among the Greek Fathers—St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom—speak of the material sense alone. The two last, however, do not positively reject the Eucharistic meaning. Three ancient

DEDUCTIONS FROM THE ABOVE PROOFS.

1. The wish of Our Lord Jesus Christ, His most cherished desire, is assuredly daily Communion for all His children, as the Church teaches us. "Optatissima" (*most desired*) is the expression used in the decree.

It is for us to correspond with this His beneficent design.

2. The right way of viewing Holy Communion is to look upon it, not as a reward for virtue¹ acquired (which was the Jansenistic notion), nor as an exercise of piety (an imperfect idea, putting what is an accessory in the place of what is substantial), but as a taking of nourishment: in fact, a *vital act* (Père Monsabré)—I live, therefore I eat.

3. Daily Communion, as proposed to everyone, far from being visionary, or a piece of reckless daring—far from only placing the honour of the Sacrament and the good of souls in jeopardy, is, on the contrary, *the normal measure* in which the Divine Author of the Sacrament would wish us to make use of His gift.

and very widely spread liturgies—viz., the Roman liturgy of St. Gelasius, the Jerusalem liturgy, and the Mozarabic—explain the "daily bread" as referring exclusively to the Eucharist.

Ancient liturgies place the *Pater Noster* after the Consecration, among the prayers in preparation for Communion. St. Gregory the Great forbade the *Pater* to be connected with any other part of the Sacrifice. In the essay here announced answers will be found to the objections of modern exegetes who have too greatly limited the meaning of the fourth petition. The preferable course seems to be that we should adopt the view of St. Augustine, who assigned to this text a spiritual, Eucharistic, and material interpretation. Thus, we should have, not the *sensus multiplex*, but the *sensus plenus* of an inspired text. See also the interesting note of Père Brock, S.J., in the *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Innsbruck, October, 1908.

¹ "Not . . . as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients" (Decree).

Let us hold on to the expression "normal régime." For it puts all teaching on this subject in the clearest light, and solves certain difficulties. It is the *normal* régime, though not obligatory. There is no necessity to take bodily food every day in order to ward off death, yet it is the *normal* practice for living in health.

A man who fails to take nourishment each day can drag on his existence for a longer or a shorter period; "fasting-men" have tried the experiment. But he grows weaker, becomes less and less capable of hard work, of vigorous struggle, of resisting unhealthy influences.

So, too, through communicating but seldom, the soul is enfeebled, and becomes increasingly liable to sickness and to the death of mortal sin.

The frequency and gravity of falls into sin also depend upon some other factors—habits as to prayer, outward occasions, temptations, bad habits, inveteracy of passions, etc.

4. Our Lord might have made one single Communion sufficient nourishment for a whole year, month, or week—nay, even for a lifetime. But the point is not what He *might* have done, but what, as a matter of fact, He *has* done. Properly speaking, He has only assigned to a Communion the function of serving as our support for one day, and not a prolonged efficacy, as in the case of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Matrimony.¹

It is just this which some pious authors fail to realize when they write: "One single Communion should have sufficed to make a saint of me, and yet after numberless Communions I am still so far from sanctity!"

We do not blame the sentiment of humility thus

¹ See Translator's foot-note.

conveyed; but the proposition itself is an erroneous one. A single Communion is no more calculated to advance us suddenly from mediocrity in virtue to the height of holiness than one meal, taken by a child, can make it develop into a youth.

In the ordinary course of Divine Providence this development of life is brought about by gradual increment, and not by sudden spurts. So is it with the plant, and the same happens with our supernatural life.

If it be meant that Communion places at our disposal the treasury of all graces, the fountains of the Saviour, so that we may draw from thence according to the measure of our need and of our confidence, one cannot but subscribe to the statement. But if the contention be that one Communion is enough to raise us to the highest sanctity, or even to secure for us a kind of indefectibility in following the path that leads to it, this is incorrect. By such an admission we should be gratuitously setting up an exception to the general law of the *gradual* progress of all life, we should be forgetting the consequences of original sin, of our past faults, and of our evil habits, and contradicting the experience of great servants of God and of the Saints. All of these went from virtue to virtue; their holiness, which took its origin from fervent Communions, was increased by succeeding ones.

It is this limited virtue of Communion that shows so clearly our need to have frequent recourse to the same.

Affections. — 1. The unstinted profusion of the Eucharistic bread reveals the generous desires of the Heart of Jesus! "Priests, give daily; Christians, seek daily, the bread of Holy Communion. . . . Why not understand, accept, and treat the Eucharist according

to the intentions of Him Who sets it before us and bestows it with so sincere and generous a Heart? If it be Bread, it possesses all the attributes of bread; it is *par excellence* our vital nourishment; it is the source of our strength, designed for all and *within the attainment of all*. . . . Bodily life without daily bread would be incomprehensible; spiritual life without daily Communion *ought not to be countenanced*.¹

2. "O Lord, how sweet is Thy spirit! For, to prove Thy love for Thy children, Thou feedest them with a most sweet bread sent down from heaven, filling the hungry poor with Thy benefits and rejecting the rich who, in their foolish pride, despise it" (Church Antiphon).

¹ Tesnière, "Commentaire," p. 31; "Pratique," pp. 112-119: *Ne devrait point s'admettre—i.e., neglect of daily, or quasi-daily, Communion should not be countenanced in the case of those who are well able to practise it, as being incompatible with a full development of the spiritual life, in the measure designed for them by Our Lord. Any less restricted application of Tesnière's words—besides exceeding his plain intention, and conflicting with the author's context—would press hardly upon deserving souls that are really unable, from circumstances, to receive Communion very frequently, and yet are striving their best in this respect. Such souls deserve all praise and as much encouragement as we can give them.*

Although Our Lord intends the Heavenly Bread to be, *normally speaking*, the *daily* nourishment of the soul's life, yet He is still the Master of His own instruments of grace. He is not tied down to them, and, still less, to any particular degree of frequency in their reception. He *can* give His grace, and in what measure He pleases, through less frequent Communion, and we cannot doubt but that He does actually give abundant grace, through rarer Communion, to those who cannot receive as often as they would.

As regards those saints and servants of God who, in days when daily or even very frequent Communion was practically unknown, attained to a high degree of sanctity, the reader is referred to the author's observations upon this point, to be seen farther on, under "Holy Communion and the Saints."

NEEDS OF THE SUPERNATURAL LIFE.

“MOREOVER, the desire of Jesus Christ and of the Church that all the faithful should daily approach the sacred banquet is directed chiefly to this end--that the faithful, being united to God by means of the Sacrament, may thence derive strength to resist their sensual passions, to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults, and to avoid those graver sins to which human frailty is liable; so that its primary purpose is not that the honour and reverence due to Our Lord may be safeguarded, or that the Sacrament may serve as a reward of virtue bestowed on the recipients (St. Augustine, Serm. 57 in St. Matt., ‘De Orat. Dom.,’ N. 7). Hence the holy Council of Trent calls the Eucharist ‘the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins’ (Sess. XIII., cap. 2).”

1. Here, according to the decree, is the chief *reason* why we ought to receive Holy Communion. In other words, a process of sickness and death is continually taking place in fallen man, to which Our Lord has willed to oppose the healing efficacy of His Divine flesh. The primary duty incumbent upon everyone who has received sanctifying grace in Baptism, or who has recovered the same in the Sacrament of Penance, is *to preserve it*. But this he can only do by the power of the Eucharist.

2. The *basis* of this teaching is to be found in that enlightening word of Jesus Christ: "This is the bread which came down from heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die."¹ These words, St. Thomas tells us, can only be understood as referring to the spiritual death of sin.² And this great doctor shows forth luminously the *preservative* action of the Holy Eucharist: "Sin being nothing but a spiritual death, our soul is saved from it in the same way that we preserve the body from physical death. Death may be brought about by inward corruption, or by derangement of vital organs, and it is warded off interiorly by nourishment and internal remedies, which strengthen and infuse health into the sources of life; and, as regards external causes of death—as, for instance, the attack of an enemy—death is held aloof by using armour and weapons. Holy Communion produces two analogous effects for protecting us from the death of sin. Within, it strengthens and intensifies the spiritual life, by uniting the soul more and more to Jesus Christ, through grace—which is both spiritual food and a spiritual remedy. And, as regards outward causes of injury, it protects the soul by repelling the assaults of devils; for it is the symbol of that Sacred Passion which has conquered hell."

3. "This desire on the part of God" (*i.e.*, that we should find in daily Communion a preservative from mortal sin) "was so well understood by the first Christians that they daily flocked to the Holy Table as to a source of life and strength. 'They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread.'³ And that this practice was continued into later ages,

¹ John vi. 50.

² III. a, q. 79, a. 6, *in corp.*

³ Acts ii. 42.

not without great fruit of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness."

Their idea was that of a holiness which lay in freedom from all mortal sin, and this holiness was to them unthinkable apart from frequent reception of the Eucharist.¹

Christians, do we weigh sufficiently the greatness of our Divine life? It is union with Jesus Christ, incorporation with Christ, that has made us Christians, and this forms the one condition upon which we are to *preserve* the benefits of our baptism. What value do the most brilliant deeds possess in the sight of God if I be devoid of charity? . . . And yet, how many fall into an inconsistency which would have seemed monstrous to primitive Christians—that of looking on themselves as good Catholics because they attend Church services on Sundays, or engage in some charitable work, while at the same time they continue for weeks and months, without scruple, in the state of mortal sin.

4. If we would shield this Divine life of the soul, so constantly exposed to danger, we must have recourse to the virtue of the Eucharist. We must return to an intimate conviction of the following truths: No life is

¹ See Vacandard, "La Pénitence publique dans l'Église primitive;" and Batiffol, "Études d'Histoire et de Théologie positive," p. 44 *et seq.* "Baptism initiated them into holiness, by giving them a share in the life of Christ, and the Eucharist maintained them in this supernatural state. . . . Grievous sin found its way with difficulty into the first communities of Christians" (Vacandard, p. 9 *et seq.*). "Sanctity was sufficiently common for the preservation of baptismal innocence to be regarded as no exceptional privilege. In theory such faithfulness was a normal state of things" (Batiffol, p. 46). "In the *Acta Thomæ*, when the Apostle gave baptism to new converts, he blessed the bread, saying, Lord, make this to be the bread of life, that those who eat thereof may remain incorruptible'" (*Ibid.*).

truly Christian without the state of grace; and the state of grace, ordinarily speaking, can only be made safe by constant Holy Communion.

Do you realize the full force of the word "life," which was so constantly upon Our Saviour's lips, when speaking of Communion? "The bread of *life*"; "My flesh for the *life* of the world"; "He that eateth Me, the same shall *live* by Me"; "He that eateth My flesh . . . hath eternal *life*"; "Except ye eat My flesh . . . ye shall not have *life* in you." And that word "life" sums up in itself all benefits, whether in the supernatural or in the natural order; it expresses the vigour and well-being which results from a healthy condition of all the organs.

But everything that is alive eats; it takes from without itself other beings, whose substance it absorbs and changes into itself.

We see this in plants, birds, animals. . . . Man, the lord of creation, causes products of an inferior nature to his own to be prepared for his table, and assimilates them. Our mind, also, from early childhood is fed by intercourse with creatures, by converse with men and books.

But a life that is Divine in character needs nourishment that is also Divine. And, says the Blessed Curé d'Ars, when God willed to feed our souls, raised by Him to a share in His own life, He searched through all creation. But He found nothing fit for their nourishment except Himself, and accordingly He gave Himself, and His whole Self.

There is a clear connection, therefore, between the support of the Divine life and feeding upon the flesh of our Saviour: *He that eateth My flesh hath life; he that eateth it not, shall not have life.*

5. But Our Lord not only desires the *preservation* of

our Divine life: He wills its *progress*, its full development.

When studying the lives of great men, we often come upon some formula which embodies their aspirations and their more notable deeds. We call it their device. . . . Is there any saying of Our Lord which possesses this character? We may without hesitation quote the following one, taken from the Parable of the Good Shepherd: "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."¹

This sentence explains everything. For this end it was that the Divine Word assumed our nature . . . for this end, that during His public life He multiplied his appeal to souls, expended the strength of His body and the miraculous powers of His Divinity; for this He wept over the faithless city and over all of us in the Garden of Olives; for this He shed the last drop of His blood, and willed that His very Heart shall be laid open upon the Cross. . . .

For the same reason, in the Holy Eucharist, He crowds together so many marvels, condemns Himself to such long periods of abandonment, endures such coldness and profanations. He desires to gain access to hearts which value Him, and to accomplish in them His work.

And this "life"—this ever-expanding life—for *whom* does Our Lord desire it? For *everyone without distinction*. In a matter in which He reveals the unlimited generosity of His Heart's desires, who shall dare to impose limits in His name? A sinner has just been absolved from his crimes. What does Jesus desire for him? Why, "that he may have life more abundantly." A fervent, holy soul is kneeling at His feet. That soul is capable of further growth in the Divine

¹ John x. 10.

life. It is that which Our Saviour wills in its regard, "that it may have life more abundantly." And now once again we are confronted with the same law. Lord, by what means shall Thy life abound in my soul, even to the point of perfection?

The reply is ever the same: He who eats My flesh shall have life in him. . . .

6. And now . . . *do we desire life* for our souls—a life preserved *continually*?

"The mystery is that we should have Faith, that we should know our soul to be immortal, and that at the close of the present life we are called to a higher and an eternal one, and yet that we should take scarcely any heed of the present life of our soul, which is the indispensable seed of the future one, in order to nourish, preserve, develop, and repair it after our moral crises and illnesses! Does it not seem as if the majority of Christians did not know that the Eucharist is the Bread of life, and that it sustains, increases, restores, and gladdens the soul's life? They communicate at Easter because there is a formal precept obliging them so to do. But they appear more intent upon ridding themselves of a strict duty than upon strengthening life by means of the Eucharistic banquet."¹

And *what kind of life* do we seek? For there is life and life. The sick man is alive . . . or, rather, he is not yet dead. The professional "fasting-man" lives, or, rather, drags on his existence. How great is the number of fasters and consumptives in the world of souls! Do we desire this languishing, suffering, moribund existence . . . or a full, vigorous, and joyful one? Our answer to this question will be shown by the frequency of our Communion. If Jesus desires

¹ Mgr. Gauthier, Bishop of Nevers: Pastoral, January, 1908.

above all things to give Himself to us in greater fullness—nay, as frequently as possible—how intensely ought we not to wish to receive Him? But the magnificent promises attached to the Holy Eucharist are only made to those who nourish themselves therewith subject to the conditions under which Our Lord instituted the same. A smaller measure of refection will certainly procure for us some share in these fruits of life. But only the normal quantity of nourishment, when it lies in our power to take it, can give us the right to that continual heightening of vitality which we ought to desire for our souls, even as Our Saviour desires it for them.

7. Listen to that awful sanction: "Except ye eat of My flesh, ye shall not have life in you." Is that not plain enough? The soul that does not receive Communion becomes a dead soul.

"The Eucharist is life—life in its fullest abundance, in its most energetic manifestations. Without it, there is nothing but weakness, languor, anæmia, and probably death. Why are so many souls lacking in vigour? Why do they languish in discouragement and cowardice? Whence come those complaints and sighs of the soul which make themselves heard on every side? Why, in a word, this all but universal moral distress—this harbinger of death? The reason is that the Christian has, like the prodigal son, deserted the family table: he has denied his soul the daily bread which God had prepared for it. Nausea of this bread and satiety have taken hold of him; he has no hunger left for the flesh of Christ, nor thirst for His blood, and thus his supernatural strength has weakened, his interior life has thinned down, passion and error have found him without power of resistance; owing to the wounds which these have inflicted

on him, life runs down and is exhausted. Seated at the Banquet of Life, in the presence of a well-laid table, the human soul perishes of inanition! Ah! we pity those poor people who endure the pangs of bodily hunger. But there is a form of suffering far more terrible which people heed not, and of which none complain—the hunger of the soul which, wrapped up in its prejudices, indifference, or lack of faith, like the prisoner of old in the walled-up tower, is cruelly tormented by hunger and devours itself.”¹

Reading.—Tesnière, “Somme Eucharistique,” vol. ii., a remarkable conference upon Holy Communion and mortal sin. Frassinetti, “Le Banquet de l’Amour Divin,” or, “Sanctifying Grace and Communion,” pp. 15-23. Cros, “Enfants,” etc., *passim*.

¹ Mgr. Carsalade du Pont, Bishop of Perpignan, Lenten Pastoral, 1908.

THE DESIRE OF THE CHURCH AND TRADITION.

JUST as daily Communion forms the dearest wish of Our Divine Lord, so we are forewarned that it is the most ardent desire of the Church, His ever-living mouthpiece, ever guided by His Holy Spirit. It befits our piety to become enlightened on this head; and, as a result, we shall perceive clearly that the Pope, far from bringing in a novelty, is leading us back again to purest and most ancient traditions.

I.

1. **The Desire of the Council of Trent.**—The decree of Pius X. opens with these words, which give adequate expression to the wishes of the Church: “The Holy Council of Trent, having in view the unspeakable treasures of grace received by the faithful in Holy Communion, speaks as follows (Session XXII., cap. 6): *‘The Holy Synod would desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate not spiritually only, by means of interior affection, but sacramentally, by actual reception of the Eucharist.’*”

These words show plainly enough that the Church wishes to see all the faithful partaking of this heavenly banquet *every day*, and deriving therefrom the fruits of holiness in ever-increasing fullness.

The meaning of this desire had already been sufficiently intimated in 1587, in a reply of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, but now it has been determined with precision.

2. **Contemporary Popes.** — Pius IX., in a brief, praised Monseigneur de Ségur for his zeal in urging the faithful to a more frequent use of Communion. He wished that his treatise might be distributed to all from the time of their first Communion, because it explained the correct rules for Holy Communion in a manner suited to the capacity of children and of the uneducated.

Leo XIII., in an encyclical upon the Divine Eucharist—which will remain as his last will and testament—addresses the whole Church, recalls the traditional reasons in favour of frequent Communion, and declares that a revival of Communion, as practised in the early centuries of the Church, must be procured in preference to every other manifestation of Eucharistic worship. “Above all, we must strive to revive a frequent reception of the Eucharist, and entirely do away with opposing prejudices, vain fears, and specious pretexts, causing people to abstain from it.”

Pius X. has given us his great decree on Daily Communion, which will stand out as the most important event in the inner life of the Church since the Council of Trent, as the death-blow to Jansenistic teaching, and the highest development of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.¹ And this signal Act figures as the

¹ “The decree *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* fills the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant with joy, and hell with fury. I do not hesitate to say of that document that it is the greatest mercy vouchsafed by the Saviour to our Holy Mother, the Church, since the Council of Trent and the revelations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque” (Cardinal Vives y Tuto, in a letter (August 23, 1908) concerning the Eucharistic Congress of Westminster).

central document of all, revealing a firm will, that is bent upon procuring the most complete realization of his great design.¹

Appeals of Bishops.—It will be useful to quote to the people, according to the regions in which they live, the solemn publication of the Acts and Decrees of Pius X. made by their chief pastors, the earnest exhortations given by Bishops for arousing the zeal of their clergy and procuring from them a fuller execution of the Papal instructions.

II.

The Pope and the Bishops: these constitute the “teaching Church.”

But they are the stewards, not the masters of doctrine; they have no power to introduce novelties. Hence we may feel sure of finding in tradition most solid grounds for the guidance they give us.

The mere statement of this proposition ought to prevent the astonishment betrayed by some of the faithful: “This call to daily Communion is a new thing!” or else the imperfect and narrow conception: “It is only in view of the peculiar needs of our time that the Pope invites us to daily Communion.”²

¹ If not already done in some previous discourse, this would be the place to enumerate the chief Acts of Pius X., mentioned farther back (p. 33).

² Here the author is evidently not denying that the recent impulse given by Pius X. to daily Communion is providential for our times—just as the rise of public devotion to the Sacred Heart, containing the germs of frequent Communion, was Heaven’s counterblast to the rigours of Jansenism. Our age is noted for two things: (1) A reluctance to believe in anything not subject to the scrutiny of the senses, nor capable of verification by means of the microscope, test-tube, and dissecting-knife. Desire for union with our “truly Hidden God,” as apprehended only by faith beneath material appearances, is a specific for this form of spiritual disease. (2) As a consequence of disbelief in

Quite the contrary. Pius X. appeals to Tradition. In this vital matter, the Church has always maintained the same principles, and proposed to the Christian people the same ideal. In order to get at the real mind of the Church, we must refer to the authorized interpreters and faithful guardians of her teaching. These are the Liturgy, the Doctors of the Church, and the Councils. The history and the practice of the Saints will confirm the lesson which has thus been handed down to us.

Clearly we cannot do more here than take a rapid glance at the subject.

The Liturgy.

(a) It teaches us that, from the very beginning, Holy Communion was the normal and obligatory complement of the Mass. Jesus had said: *Do this for a memory of Me*. After transubstantiating the bread, He had given it, saying—not “adore it,” but “*take ye and eat.*” Renew this repast, consecrate the bread, and give it to everyone, as you have seen Me do.

(b) “This desire on the part of God was so well understood by the first Christians, that they daily flocked to the Holy Table as to the source of life and strength. ‘They were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread’ (Acts ii. 42). And that this practice was con-

the unseen and unseeable, the soul is thrown back upon the things of earth and dragged down by sensual delights. The Eucharist, through the mediation of earthy symbols, lifts the soul up to personal union with God; and by substituting desire for the All-Holy God and the pure love of Him for unholy cravings and affections, becomes equally an antidote to the rebellion of concupiscence. It remedies both these disorders of the senses.—7.

tinued into later ages, not without great fruits of holiness and perfection, the holy Fathers and ecclesiastical writers bear witness" (Decree).

St. Jerome tells us that in the fifth century daily Communion was still the practice of the Roman Church—the model and mistress of other Churches.

It must be remembered that although, on account of persecutions, wars, and barbaric invasions, the meetings of Christians were not, and could not be, held daily in all places, they nevertheless took place as often as three or four times a week—as at Carthage; that the sacred species were frequently taken home; and, above all, that the notion of receiving every day was never called in question.

(c) So closely bound together, during the first ages, were these three things—the assembling of Christians, the Sacrifice, and Communion—that one single word, *συναξις*, still survives in theological nomenclature, representing all three, and signifying the Eucharist in all its aspects. The learned Benedictine, Cabrol, gives us the following details, amongst others: "All those who assisted at the Sacrifice had to partake of it by Communion; the idea of union on the part of the faithful with the Pontiff in the same Sacrifice was never lost sight of by antiquity. . . . In the Roman liturgy of the seventh century, the deacon made the following announcement: 'Let all those who do not intend to receive Communion depart!' . . . After all present had communicated, a portion of the Eucharist was set aside to be carried by the deacons to the sick and to prisoners."¹

(d) The prayers still recited daily by the priest at Mass suppose that the faithful share in the Com-

¹ "Le Livre de la Priere antique," pp. 113, 115, 417.

munion. He prays that "all we who share in this Sacrifice and receive the Body and Blood of the Lord may be filled with every grace and blessing."¹

The Holy Fathers.

Thus do we style the ecclesiastical writers and Doctors of the first ages. They are to us the living witnesses of the tradition existing in their day, and guides in the faith to succeeding times. In studying their teaching one is struck by the following points which, as it were, sum it up:

1. Their striking *unanimity* in praising daily Communion, and the *frequency* of their exhortations to the faithful upon that subject.

2. The *reason* urged by them is that abstinence from the Eucharistic bread places the life of the soul in jeopardy: "Except ye eat of My flesh ye shall not have life in you." This is the word to which they continually appeal, without contemplating, in their discussions, the possibility of the bread not being daily.

3. The *condition* which they require for eating the bread of life—viz., that the soul be already living the life of grace.

"If our sins," says St. Hilary, "are not such as have deserved excommunication, we must not defraud ourselves of the remedy of Our Lord's Body. For there is reason to fear lest, by being long deprived of the Body of Christ, we be shut out from salvation."²

And St. Ambrose: "He who is unfit to receive Communion each day is unfit at the end of a year;"³ that

¹ Canon of the Mass, in the prayer "Supplices te."

B. Hilary, Pope. See Grat., "De Consec.," dist. 2., can. 15, p. 455.

St. Ambrose, "De Sacram.," lib. vii.

is to say, that what is an obstacle to-day—*i.e.*, mortal sin—is equally such at Easter-time.

4. *No distinction* is made between rare and more frequent Communion, as far as concerns the dispositions needed.

5. Lastly, *they protest with like vigour* against a sparing use of Communion and against sacrilegious Communions.

A passage from St. John Chrysostom gives a sprightly turn to exhortations of the present kind: "It is purity of conscience," he says, "and not the season of the year, that makes it the time for approaching the Holy Table. This mystery is not greater at Easter than at other times; Easter lasts the whole year." And elsewhere: "What would you think of a person who, when invited to a feast, washed his hands, seated himself at the table, laid out a meal for himself, and then ate nothing? Would he not give offence to the host who had invited him? Would it not have been better for him to stay away? Why have you not received Communion? 'I am not worthy,' you will reply. Well, then, in that case you are also unworthy of the fellowship of prayers." In the Saint's eyes, to hear Mass without partaking of Christ's Body, if not a positive fault—that is, a violation of a definite precept—was at least a disorder, a folly, a lack of courtesy, a piece of boorishness towards the Divine Master of the feast Who invites us.¹

6. It would be easy to show that all the instructions of Doctors and Fathers are to be found renewed in the decree of Pius X.

Coubé, "La Communion Hebdomadaire," 2nd. edit., p. 83.

The Councils.

1. Some of these, belonging to the first centuries, pronounced censures against those who should venture to attend Mass without communicating at it; others declared Communion to be binding at least on Sundays.

2. We will now take two Œcumenical Councils, held at periods when Communion had become less frequent among the faithful. Their teachings supplement each other. They speak as follows:

Council of Lateran IV.—"Let each of the faithful, who has reached the years of discretion, receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist at least at Easter; and if he do not, let entrance into the sacred precincts be forbidden him during life, and Christian burial denied to him at death."

Council of Trent.—"The holy Council, with truly paternal affection, warns, exhorts, begs, and entreats, by the bowels of the Divine mercy, all and everyone bearing the Christian name to be mindful of the excessive love of Jesus Christ, Who has given us His flesh for nourishment. Let them show their faith, devotion, and piety, by receiving this heavenly bread frequently, in order that they may draw from thence life for their souls, and strength to overcome the temptations of this world."

The mere perusal of these passages shows us that Communion at Easter, far from satisfying the desire of the Church, is put forward by her as the utmost limit of her motherly toleration towards negligent children, and she strives to bring them back to the realization and practice of their duties by threatening them with severest punishment. Never has the Church in any way guaranteed the preservation of

their supernatural life to those who content themselves with an Easter Communion.

On the other hand, we hear her fervent and pressing exhortations. On which side should true children of the Church range themselves? Is it not a strange perversity, and a sign of our weak faith, that in a matter regarding which our chief anxiety should be to take all that Divine love allows to us, we should be chiefly concerned to know how much of it we may reject without a breach of duty?

Historical Confirmation.

Three lessons issue from the history of Holy Communion:

1. The ages of *fervour* were precisely those in which the Holy Table was most frequented.

2. The *decadence* of Christian life was prepared for by aloofness from Holy Communion.

3. *Revivals* were characterized by a return to more frequent Communion.

Leo XIII. proclaims the first two of these laws in the following terms: "History witnesses to the fact that Christian life flourished most among the people in ages when the Eucharist was received more frequently. On the other hand, there is another equally well-established fact—that when men neglected the heavenly bread, and, so to say, conceived a disgust for it, the strength of Christian faith was invariably seen to languish in a notable degree."

In the sixteenth century God raised up saints to revive fervour in the Church and to labour for the realization of the wishes expressed by the Council of Trent.

There was a constellation of apostles of the Eucharist.

We need only to mention Ignatius de Loyola, Philip Neri, Anthony Zaccaria, Charles Borromeo, Paschal Baylon, Vincent de Paul, and John Baptist de la Salle.

This splendid impulse was checked, alas! only too successfully by the advance of Jansenism.¹

Our Lord counteracted it by means of devotion to His Sacred Heart.

At length, after the lapse of a century, we are witnessing a *revival* of Eucharistic worship and a return to frequent and daily Communion, which is becoming more and more noticeable.

This revival has been brought about—

(a) By the labours of saintly men—the Curé d’Ars, Dom Bosco, Cottolengo, Mgr. de Ségur, etc., all of them apostles of frequent Communion.

(b) Through the turn taken by theological studies in the direction of Patristic traditions—Frassinetti, Gennari, etc.

(c) Through the powerful influence of Eucharistic Congresses.

(d) By associations (*œuvres*) and religious institutes dedicated to the work of reparation to the Blessed Sacrament.

(e) By the voice of supreme authority in the Church.

Conclusions.—1. *The Church has not changed.* By the voice of her Liturgy, Doctors, Councils, Popes, and Saints, she has never ceased recalling to the minds of the faithful the primitive ideal of daily Communion. Pius X. acts as the faithful echo of all these voices in leading us back to purity of doctrine, and removing all uncertainties.

2. *On our side*, let us not be degenerate Christians.

¹ An excellent historical appreciation of this heresy is to be found at the beginning of “Confesseur de l’Enfance, etc.,” 3rd. edit., by Père Cros, S.J.

If some noble, viewing the portrait-gallery of his forefathers, were to recall their great deeds, and yet refuse to emulate them to the best of his power, we should write him down a degenerate. And if we ourselves would fain escape a similar reproach, let us imitate the Christians of fervent times, and go to Our Lord daily. How can anyone forego one single opportunity for receiving Him? Is there any happiness for the soul to be compared with a renewed possession of Jesus in person?

Reading. — Vacant, “Dictionnaire de Théologie. Article: “Communion Fréquente”; historical appreciation fairly exact. Frassinetti, “Le Banquet,” from p. 100. The primitive Church teaching of the Fathers.

NECESSARY DISPOSITIONS FOR DAILY COMMUNION.

1. "IF frequent and daily Communion is desired by Jesus Christ and by His Church for all the faithful ; if all are invited to it without distinction of age, sex, or condition, we cannot but conclude that this practice must needs be compatible with such mediocrity of dispositions as every good Christian worthy of the name is able to supply."¹

Our Lord does not summon us to his banquet and then interpose insuperable barriers.

It is just this question about needful dispositions that has occasioned so much controversy during these last centuries ; it was precisely at this point that age-long prejudices, needing to be removed, had accumulated. It was because there were vagaries to be corrected that Pius X. intervened with such decision and solemnity.

2. Two principles pervade his whole teaching about the dispositions required :

(a) The character of *food* which Communion possesses (see above, p. 39).

(b) The primary end of its reception—which is preservation from grievous sin, and not the honour and

¹ R. P. Couet, *Le Très Saint Sacrement*, January, 1903, p. 459.

reverence due to Jesus Christ, nor yet that it may serve as a reward or prize for virtue bestowed on communicants.

3. As these two reasons for receiving exist every day, it follows that all are invited to receive, provided they be already possessed of the supernatural life (state of grace) and desire to preserve and increase the same (right intention). Here we have fixed for us, from henceforward, the two necessary and sufficient conditions for every Communion.

The State of Grace.—A dead man does not eat! To profane the body of Jesus Christ by receiving it into a heart soiled with mortal sin would be to eat condemnation to oneself.

“It is to be noticed that the decree does not require a state of grace that has been constant, but the state of grace in the ordinary sense; it is enough to be in that state at the moment of receiving Communion, provided one has what is necessary for being in that state—a firm and sincere purpose not to sin mortally in future.”¹

No one is required to be absolutely certain that they are in God's grace, but only *not* to be certain of having committed a mortal sin since their last Confession.²

¹ Rev. Père Besson, S.J., Director of the *Revue Théologique*, in his commentary on the decree. This observation has its point for those who are struggling with some inveterate habit of sin, and might wrongly think themselves unfit to receive on account of their frequent relapses.—*T.*

² St. Alphonsus teaches that a person who doubts whether he has sinned mortally or not may *lawfully* go to Communion *without* previous Confession, whether the doubt be positive or negative. Antoni remarks that this doctrine must be taught to the people if it be desired that the faithful should go forward with frequent Communion. An experience, he adds, of missions, during thirty years and more, has convinced me that it is the fear of being in mortal sin, and hence of making a sacrilegious Communion, which causes so many who live

The Right Intention.—Let us cling to the definition given by the decree itself: “A right intention consists in this: that he who approaches the Holy Table should do so, not out of routine, or vain-glory, or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united with Him by charity, and of seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.”¹

The passage states clearly the motives for which we are not to communicate, and those for which we are to do so.

4. Some remarks are necessary :

(a) If some human and imperfect motive, not sinful in itself—*e.g.*, custom—formed a secondary motive conducing towards Communion, but not the chief one, the intention, though not quite pure, would not be entirely spoilt. Such is the case, for instance, when a person says his prayers because it is the practice in his surroundings, but nevertheless recognizes and desires their intrinsic efficacy.

In practice, it is enough if the communicant does not *exclude* from view the chief object and fruit of the sacred action he is performing.

habitually in the grace of God to omit Communion. We may borrow, also, from the same writer this useful remark: “It is a clear mistake to teach souls that they may receive Communion daily, provided that their consciences are calm and peaceful. How many souls, most dear to God, there are that never experience such perfect peace! The proper thing is to tell them without scruple: ‘Receive every day, provided you are not sure of having sinned mortally.’”

¹ It is equally important that we cling to the expression itself—“*recta intentio*”—and to its authorized rendering “right intention.” For, by substituting private versions—perhaps of vaguer import—it is easy, as experience shows, to keep the door still open to those very ascetical exaggerations and vain fears which it is the whole purport of the Holy See to shut out.

(b) It is not necessary for the communicant to set before himself the motives of his Communion explicitly and actually. The mere fact of his approaching the Holy Table of his free-will is a proof that he is moved thereto by faith and confidence. In the case of a daily communicant, the right intention becomes permanent and habitual.

(c) Any one of the specified intentions suffices. One may propose them under this formula, which is simple and attainable in all states of souls: I communicate *in order to become better*.¹

(d) As far as concerns the necessary dispositions, no distinction is to be drawn between infrequent and more frequent Communion. "The Church has laid down no precept requiring more perfect dispositions for daily, than for weekly or monthly Communion; and far more abundant fruits will be gathered from daily Communion than from weekly or monthly."² In other words, while the Easter Communion, or monthly Communions, are not to be secured by us at a lower price, more frequent Communions do not cost us any dearer.

(e) These two dispositions are necessary and *sufficient*. The faithful should note that many pious books confuse what is necessary and sufficient with what is desirable and more perfect.

¹ "Every desire that we conceive to enrich our souls with the treasures of Jesus Christ secures for us the right intention needed for receiving the Sacrament" (Bishop of Metz, Pastoral, 1908, on Daily Communion).

² Tesnière, "Commentary," p. 37. (Hence, the graduated scale of frequency, arranged according to the degree of perfection reached by the penitent, which we find in theological or ascetical books, is now entirely obsolete. Books are to be corrected *in the light of the decree*, and not the decree by the books, whoever their authors.—T.)

5. *From the above explanation, two conclusions are to be gathered :*

(a) When these two dispositions are present—the state of grace and a right intention—Communion is *always fruitful*. In no case does the Church induce her children to sin, nor urge them to an act that is hurtful to their souls. Yet we should have to impute to her this enormity if the two dispositions required by her were not, in every case (*en toute hypothèse*), sufficient to secure the fruit of the Sacrament and the good of souls.

(b) Never is the omission of a Communion, that a person can make with this twofold disposition, *in itself* profitable. This is on account of the *ex opere operato* working of the Sacrament—a thing far superior to the merit of our good works.¹ Better an imperfect Communion than to omit Communion.

“The action *ex opere operato* of the Sacrament, when received day after day, compensates to a great extent for the loss of the additional benefit which more per-

¹ This principle might be thus illustrated : I set about going to Holy Communion, but I give way most deliberately to distraction, and commit venial sins of anger and impatience during my preparation. Accordingly, when the time comes, I stay away from Communion, as I put it, “out of reverence and humility.” The principle explained above shows this course to be “penny-wise and pound-foolish.” I am still (*ex hypothesi*) in the state of grace ; I still wish to be better. What is my poor act of “reverence and humility” in abstaining compared to due respect for “the desire of Jesus Christ,” declared to me by the Church ? What is the merit of my act of virtue compared to the merit derived from receiving Our Lord, or what its efficacy as a self-inflicted remedial punishment for my faults compared to the “Divine remedy” of Christ’s Body and Blood ? Why, even though I had no wish at all to be rid of these particular faults—*i.e.*, had “affection” for these venial sins—my best hope of getting rid of that affection lies in receiving, not in abstaining from, the Eucharist. See author’s quotation—Art. 3 of the decree—under the next heading, Venial Sin.

fect personal dispositions on the part of the communicant might have secured for him."¹

These two dispositions—the only ones demanded by the Church—are within the reach of every soul possessed of a good will. Were there room for any distinction among souls²—(we must make none, since the Church does not)—one might say that the more a soul is conscious of weaknesses and imperfections, the more easily will it attain to a right intention; that, in any case, it might be invited to increase the number of its Communions. Since Communion is both food and medicine, those who are weaker and more sickly in spirit are precisely the ones who have the greatest need of it.

Venial Sin.—“Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning in future;³ and if they have this sincere purpose, it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins, and from all affection thereto” (Decree).

Observations. — 1. The Church does not wish us to make light of venial sin, but only to remember that it does not involve the death of the soul, nor deprive us of God's friendship. The soul stained therewith still remains, through the presence of sanctifying grace, *supremely dear to God*; and we need not wonder that the Word made Flesh should seek, by means of His Sacred Humanity, to protect and strengthen the Divine life in that soul.

¹ Barbe, Edward, S.J., “La Communion Quotidienne,” p. 23.

² *I.e.*, who are in grace.

³ *I.e.*, mortally.—*T.*

2. Holy Communion is just the most effectual means of purifying oneself from venial sin. It is, as St. Alphonsus puts it, a virtual detestation of venial sin. It acts upon the enfeebled soul as a tonic or cordial does upon an anæmic constitution, or—to adopt a comparison of the Curé d'Ars—like a bellows upon a fire that is nearly out.

3. A firm grasp of this truth practically does away with the supposed scandal of imperfections and faults noticed in daily communicants.

If I myself have to bewail the number of such faults, I shall not on that account give up Communion, for my soul would only sicken the more. But I will communicate with humility and contrition, hoping to obtain from Communion itself a cleansing from past faults and preservation from future ones.

If I see around me people who still remain very imperfect in spite of their daily Communion, I shall neither be astounded nor shocked, mindful that they are not forbidden daily access to the Holy Table by the Church for faults of that kind, and that they cannot fail to profit greatly thereby as long as they remain in the state of grace.

Confession.—The Sacred Congregation of Indulgences declared, February 14, 1906, that those who receive Communion daily, or nearly so, can gain plenary indulgences without being bound to confess regularly every week, or every fortnight, or even every month.

By this ordinance the Sovereign Pontiff has wished to emphasize the practical character of the decree, and to remove all obstacles to its most thorough application.

1. Very frequent recourse to the confessional on the part of large numbers of the faithful, who have be-

come constant guests at the Holy Table, would impose upon confessors an enormous burden, that would often prove incompatible with their other ministerial duties.

2. Many of the faithful have even less opportunity for such frequent Confession than for Communion, the latter fitting in, on Sundays, with the hearing of Mass, while few of the faithful would obtain access to the confessional on the morning itself.

3. It was advisable to work against Jansenistic exaggerations, which had multiplied Confessions at the expense of Communions, and turned the Sacrament of Penance into an instrument of torture. There was need to remember that Holy Communions, in proportion as they multiplied, would diminish mortal sin, and would thus reduce the need for obligatory Confessions; and then, that venial faults can be remitted by many other means besides Confession. Such is the express teaching of the Council of Trent. We must make the faithful know it, and attack that still deeply rooted prejudice: "After that hasty word, after that sloth in my religious duties . . . I shall not dare to go to Communion."¹

¹ "How many practical remnants of that hateful heresy [Jansenism] still afflict us, in spite of the strict orthodoxy of our faith! Habits are more tenacious than doctrines. Certain 'seizures' committed upon souls by a spiritual direction that forgets that the priest is not an irresponsible legislator, but merely a judge-counsellor; deplorable exaggerations in giving First Communion Retreats, with the result that a child sees nothing but sin everywhere, and exhausts its fervour in harassing fears; and those printed examinations of conscience which imprudently impart to it knowledge of faults which it would never have thought of, mixing up remote occasions of sin with proximate ones, so as to multiply sinful matter indefinitely, thus falsifying and tormenting delicate consciences for the rest of their lives; and those *ameudes honorables* recited solemnly, in which the cruel wild beast devours the son of Jacob, whose robe of innocence has been dragged in

4. Practical experience shows how necessary it is to instruct the faithful thoroughly on these different points. Let them know that, if their conscience does not accuse them of any great fault, they may multiply their Communions. Recourse to the Sacrament of Penance will still remain of the greatest use for purifying the soul, for sifting the conscience more fully, for receiving advice and guidance, for exciting sorrow for faults; but should there be no suitable opportunity for Confession, this is no reason for depriving oneself of Holy Communion.

The Advice of the Confessor.—"That the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked. Confessors, however, are to be careful not to dissuade one (*ne quemquam avertant*) from frequent and daily Communion, provided he is in a state of grace and approaches with a right intention."

Here are the points on which the faithful should be instructed in connection with this matter¹:

1. Communion, even daily Communion, is an excellent action proposed to all alike (Articles 1 and 5 of the decree); it does not, of its own nature, need any permission at all; and certainly, during centuries, no permission used to be sought.

2. It is a point "of greater prudence and more merit" to seek the confessor's counsel. Here are its advantages:

the mud, etc. . . . And then the long interval between the first Communion and the second," etc. (From a pastoral instruction on the decrees by Mgr. Guillibert, Bishop of Fréjus and Toulon, 1908).

¹ In our "Devoirs des Confesseurs" (Eucharistic Congress at Metz, 1907) the reader will find the opinions of theologians, who have interpreted this article of the decree in the same way as ourselves.

(a) The *confessor* will gain knowledge about the conduct of the penitent in relation to his use of the most powerful means of salvation and spiritual progress; he will be able to judge of the rectitude of his intention, and exhort him to greater generosity.

(b) The *penitent* performs an act of humility and submission towards the priest, who stands towards him as the representative of the Church—the guide of souls; he is, moreover, thus protected from the danger of illusions, which are always possible.

3. There is no precept of the Church obliging a person to follow the confessor's advice, which, consequently, creates no conscientious obligation. If by chance, contrary to the ruling of the decree, the advice were against daily Communion in the case of those who would make it with the two needful dispositions, the penitent would do well to avail himself of his right.

4. The *advice* need not be sought for at each Confession, especially by such as confess frequently. Each confessor being possessed of the same power, advice given by one for a certain period should not be submitted for endorsement to another confessor during the said period.

PREPARATION AND THANKSGIVING.

“BUT whereas the Sacraments of the New Law, though they take effect *ex opere operato*, nevertheless produce greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better, therefore care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances, and duties ” (Decree, Article 4).

A. Fundamental Principles.

This statement of the decree contains the following propositions :

I. *Every care* should be taken in making preparation and thanksgiving.

II. This, for the purpose of experiencing *more fully* the effects of the Sacrament.

III. But, at the same time, without imposing on people of all ages and conditions any absolute and uniform rules.

I. *Why should this care be taken?* (a) Because, since Communion is the visit of God to us, we can never pay to Him the reverence, gratitude, and love which He deserves; and also in order to humble ourselves to the extent that our nothingness and sinfulness demand. What is half an hour for exciting

these sentiments, even were it spent in most ardent devotion? (Here considerable profit might be derived from the considerations contained in the "Imitation of Christ," iv. 1.)

(b) Because the time after receiving Communion is assuredly the most precious in our whole lives. "Jesus Christ," says Saint Theresa, "then dwells in our soul as if seated upon a throne of graces, and He seems to say to us, like to the man born blind: *Quid tibi vis faciam?* Beloved soul, tell me, what is it that thou desirest? For I have come purposely in order to grant thee all the graces that thou askest of Me."

II. Once the essential conditions are secured, the main fruit of the Sacrament is always certain. But, evidently, the graces received will be *increased* according to the greater or lesser perfection of our actual dispositions.

Some comparisons may help us to understand this. It is not enough to cast seed upon the ground; the better cultivated soil will always yield the more abundant fruit. The better prepared a photographic plate is, the more perfect will be the picture obtained.

"Just as the combination of two mysterious fluids causes an electric spark to burst forth, so the meeting of God and man at the Holy Table kindles on the soul a spark of love which soon develops into a vast conflagration, if the surroundings be favourable."¹

Be it our care to render the surroundings favourable to the Divine operations; let us resolve to do all we can to profit by the gift of God. By perfecting our Communions we shall be perfecting our lives.

III. In other words, we do not expect from a child what we might well require from a grown-up man:

¹ Bellamy, "The Effects of Communion," p. 23.

nor from a very busy person what one might look for in a contemplative; nor from a weak invalid what is possible to a healthy person with faculties in full vigour, etc.

St. Thomas observes that application to business, study, domestic cares, so absorb a man that, saving some special grace, it is impossible for him to enjoy sensible devotion like those who are free from such distractions. And if these occupations be well ordered, and in accord with the duties of one's state of life, they are the expression of the will of God.¹

"You should never omit Communion for lack of time to prepare for it when that time has been devoted to serving the family, attending to an invalid, or to any other charitable office that did not admit of delay."

B. Practical Hints.

1. We must not confuse the essentials of devotion with sensible experience of the same. The correct idea is that Jesus comes to us to give, not to receive, not so much to converse with us as to *nourish* us. This thought will beget in us both a truer appreciation of His goodness and a more humble realization of our own neediness.

2. It is good to *plan beforehand* how we will set to work both *before* and *after* Communion, so as not to leave things to chance. Many do not think about it till the time comes, and consequently manage badly. Once a suitable method has been fixed upon, we should

¹ St. Francis of Sales also teaches us that our occupations inevitably give rise to distractions during our prayers, but that it is better we should have them (when involuntary) than that our duties should be neglected.—*T.*

not be anxious constantly to vary it, nor to have exquisite thoughts. "The commoner ones are the best," St. John Baptist de la Salle used to say, "for there is nothing more moving or more capable of uniting us with God than to ponder the most ordinary truths taught us by our faith concerning this mystery."

3. For the ordinary faithful one may divide methods for occupying the time before and after Communion into two kinds: vocal prayer and the expression of personal thoughts and affections. *Before* Communion, the set prayers commonly come first, and these suggest spontaneous prayer; *after* Communion, this order is usually inverted.¹

Though use be made of set forms of prayer given in manuals of devotions, one must remember that these are only helps, the object being to penetrate oneself with the sentiments which they suggest. Persons who practise meditation can easily turn the subject of their prayer towards preparation for Communion. The plan of uniting oneself with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is preferable to other methods which draw their inspiration from other sources.

4. If converse (or "colloquy") is to be conducted easily between Jesus and the soul, the latter must conceive an earnest desire for it, and exert itself. First, it must arouse its faith in the Real Presence and seek to realize the person of Our Lord in His different aspects—as a child . . . teacher . . . wonder-worker . . . crucified . . . manifesting His Sacred Heart. This is a most efficacious way of excluding impressions that come to us from external objects.

¹ This tallies with the advice commonly given to spend a little time after receiving in spontaneous prayer without using a book.—*T.*

5. *During thanksgiving*, the circumstances of the case seem to point out the way quite clearly—namely, that we should attend first of all to Our Lord, and afterwards to ourselves.

We will offer to Jesus, present within us, acts of adoration, thanksgiving, and love, in union with His Blessed Mother, the most holy Virgin, Mary.

As regards ourselves, we will consider what we are to offer to our Divine Guest, and what to ask of His bounty. St. John Baptist de la Salle expresses the first of these counsels very happily: "Let a person call to mind the thing which he usually finds the hardest in God's service, and reason with himself thus: 'Here is God giving Himself to you; will you not give yourself entirely to Him? And since it is that particular sacrifice which He cares for, will you not overcome yourself for His love? For the reverence that you bear Him, will you not give it Him? Surely you will not venture to refuse it.' It is thus that we must rouse and force ourselves to self-conquest."

6. Among the set prayers of a simple kind that we might recite while with Jesus, the following are suggested: the Our Father, *Magnificat*, Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, or of the Sacred Heart. If a hymn be sung, one should enter into the meaning of the words.

As for distractions, we need only blame ourselves for them if we take no pains to avoid the cause of them, or, at least, if we do not try to resist them when they occur. The very displeasure we feel at their presence is a sign of our good-will to banish them.

7. "During the day, be like a vessel that has contained some costly perfume, like a saint who has spent an hour in heaven; do not forget the royal visit

which Jesus has paid you" (Ven. Père Eymard). Nevertheless, though frequent remembrance of the morning's Communion be in every way desirable, yet this is not necessary in order that the Sacrament may produce its fruit; it is not even a proof that greater benefit has been produced. I may not think much about the meals I have taken; but, all the same, my activity during the day is a continual effect of the strength they put into me.

Reading.—Frassinetti, "Le Banquet," pp. 79-98. Necessary dispositions. Antoni, "Why do so many vain fears," etc. Cros, "Children at the Holy Table," chaps. xxxviii., xxxix. Thanksgiving. Mahieu, "Le Pain de Vie." This book contains some excellent hints on the way to make Communion an aid to progress in the spiritual conflict.

GOOD WORKS AND SACRAMENTS.

This note purposes to explain more clearly the sufficiency of the dispositions required by the Church; it should be borne in mind for answering objections. Hence its insertion at this point.

1. Fundamental Notion.—When I pray, give an alms, or perform an act of penance, the merit of these works depends solely upon the greater or lesser perfection of my interior dispositions. It is not so with a person who receives a Sacrament. Here the proper and principal fruit is always secured to anyone who puts no insuperable obstacle to the action of the Sacrament.

In the case of Sacraments "of the living"—as, for example, the Eucharist—there is no other obstacle except mortal sin.

2. Application.—The infant just baptized can receive Confirmation. It lives, and is capable of new forms of

life. The sick person who has lost consciousness can receive Extreme Unction, with all its fruits. Though incapable of prayer or of other good works, he is capable of Sacramental grace. The latter does not depend upon his devotion, nor even upon his consciousness ; it works of its own virtue *ex opere operato*.

But if that child or that sick person is in possession of his faculties, he ought to receive the Sacraments piously, and will thereby merit additional grace.

So it is with the Eucharist. The state of grace guarantees its fruitfulness, but the sacredness of the act requires that we should strive for great devotion. At the same time, the graces thus obtained *do but complete and perfect the main effects which are already secure*.

3. The efficacy of the Sacraments for increasing sanctifying grace is far superior to that of our good works. With a view to bringing this home to his audience, the Curé d'Ars had recourse to the following graphic illustration ; " Place in one scale of the balance all the good works in the world and one Communion in the other, and it will be like weighing a speck of dust against a mountain."

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

General Remarks.

1. **The Importance of Refutation.**—See above, Instruction to Priests, pp. 22-23. Words of Leo XIII.: “We must entirely banish all opposing prejudices—those vain fears and specious pretexts which lead people to abstain from Communion” (Encyclical on the Divine Eucharist).

2. **Reasons.**—(a) A very mountain of prejudices has been piled up; theological and ascetical works and manuals of devotion are impregnated with them; the practice of pious souls and of many priests is penetrated with the same.

(b) By refuting objections, we complete our task of making the doctrine clear, and that in a way which is all the more persuasive for being more interesting.

(c) The devil works without ceasing against frequent and daily Communion (“Imitation of Christ,” iv. 10). The faithful should be forewarned and armed. Let them realize that they will have to fight if they are to remain constant to the practice.

3. **The type of excuses** by means of which people evade the invitations of Our Lord is given us in the Gospel parable of the feast (Luke xiv.). That is why this parable is assigned as the subject for the homiletic discourse on the Sunday within the octave of Corpus Christi, should the Triduum be held at that time. Commentaries upon this passage will be within the reach of every priest.

It has seemed preferable here to set down the more common forms of current prejudices. It might be useful to call the attention of the people to those Catholic truths which are ignored by such objections, so that they may learn to answer the latter by referring to the principles set forth in the decree.¹

4. **Objections.**—(a) *Conflicting with the desire of Our Lord and of the Church.*

“It is too often.”

“I have no time.”

“It’s a novelty” (see above, p. 58).

“The Church is satisfied with Communion at Easter.”

“One can be a good Catholic without that.”

“I shall become too good.”²

(b) *Conflicting with the idea of nourishment and the needs of the supernatural life.*

“I am not worthy.”

“It is more solid to correct one’s faults.”³

“I don’t feel the need of it” (“Appel Aux Hommes,” p. 25).

“I fear machine-work, or routine.”

“That is all very well for women and children.”

(c) *Conflicting with the necessary dispositions.*

“I do it better when I do it less frequently.”

“I have not sufficient devotion,” or, “I am not so piously inclined.”

“I feel nothing.”

“I should have to watch over myself so carefully.”

“I am married” (“Aux Hommes,” p. 26).

“I should have to go to Confession so often” (*ibid.*, p. 31).

(d) *Conflicting with the right idea as to the fruits of the Sacrament.*

“I do not improve” (“Aux Hommes,” p. 33).

(e) *Miscellaneous.*

Human respect: “People will notice me.”

“I shall get to it in time” (“Aux Hommes,” p. 51).

¹ For the answer to some of these objections the reader is referred to “Appel aux Hommes,” by the present author. (See also “Notes on Daily Communion,” p. 70, and “Even for Men,” by the Translator.)

² Added by the T.

³ Added by the T.

“I shall never keep it up” (see p. 90, No. 4).¹

“I have my own customs” (“Aux Hommes,” p. 25).

5. But the judgment of the Church should prevail over all objections. To her alone is given the mission to lay down doctrine. Nevertheless, it would seem that the objection, muttered in undertones, possesses a secret force that is far more persuasive than declarations of the truth made by Church authority, especially if the argument justifies our love of ease, leads us to abstain from the Sacraments, or concludes in favour of less exertion. Of course, I cannot help hearing these murmurs. But do I know how to estimate them at their true value, and no more?

Possibly I repeat them to others. Instead of taking my place and share at the banquet, I prefer to stand aloof and survey the constant guests with a critical eye from a distance. The fact is that I have never well weighed the lesson of Christ: “They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill” (Matt. ix. 12).

“I Have no Time.”

1. One must recognize the fact that there are *real hindrances* to daily Communion, especially in the case of working people, country folk—particularly during times of exceptional labour; for those who live at a distance from Church, who are dependent upon the will of another, or who have urgent duties of a professional kind, etc.

To people so situated, one would say two things :

(a) Our Lord knows the desire of your heart, no less than the obstacle which hinders you. He will not be

¹ What if you *do not*, or *cannot*, keep it up? Nevertheless, a positive gain is obtained while you do. How does this sound? “I can earn £10 a week now : later it will be only 10s. So I won't accustom myself to earning £10 while I can (!).”—*T.*

displeased at an omission for which you are not responsible. But strive to maintain that *desire* to receive Him by means of fervent *spiritual* Communion.¹

(b) Few people, comparatively, can plead the same hindrance as regards *weekly* Communion. For the latter can be made at the same time as the Sunday Mass. There is time enough on that day for visiting, walks, excursions, etc.

Would that the days might return when Sunday Communion went hand in hand with Sunday Mass!

2. Our Lord has not made His religion for the benefit of the leisured classes. He foreknew that His children would have to be workers, that in all ages these would form the main bulk of men. But this did not deter Him from proposing daily Communion as His dearest wish, and as the normal régime.

But to these busy and even over-burdened ones (*qui onerati estis*) the Master gives the following counsels:

One thing alone is necessary (*cf.* Luke x. 42).

Man does not live only by the bread that nourishes his body (*cf.* Matt. iv. 4).

“Labour not only for the meat that perisheth, but for that which remaineth unto eternal life.”²

In other terms, remember that your first duty, your chief business, is to live like Christians.

3. How many exaggerate the difficulty, and falsely imagine that they cannot receive Communion more frequently!

Here are some tests by means of which their fond delusions may be detected:

(a) Were it an occasion of some great temporal gain—say, a distribution of banknotes—would they not find time to come?

¹ The preacher might explain what is meant by a spiritual Communion, and how it may be made.—*T.*

² John vi. 25.

(b) In all ranks of life—among students, business men, working people, servants, poor mothers of families—one finds Christians who have grasped the benefit of Holy Communion, and put up with inconveniences and sacrifices for the sake of receiving it daily. Are those others more busy, or is it that they have less zeal for their own souls?

(c) Do not people waste time during the day? Would not a better arrangement of their occupations make easy to them what they at present declare to be impossible?

4. Your affairs will prosper more, your business will be the gainer! Do you set no value upon the help of Our Lord? Will He have no care for those who have come to Him in the morning?

With Him, there will be two of you at work, two suffering! You will make a better job of it in a shorter time: no one who has tried the experience will gainsay the statement. This is due to a twofold cause: the soul, on the one hand, is calmer, clearer, more wholly the mistress of its faculties; on the other hand, God's blessing is more abundant.

5. These busy Christians must be taught to reduce their preparation and thanksgiving to the minimum *rather than to omit their Communions*,¹ and forfeit the immense graces which they bring.

Busy people usually remain a shorter time at table, but they do not leave out their meal.

Conclusions.—Words of St. Francis de Sales: "Those who are not very busy should communicate often, because they have the opportunity; and those who are busy, because they need it. A man who has to work hard, and is full of cares, needs to take very nourishing food, and to take it frequently" (Introduction to a "Devout Life," Part II., chap. xxi.).

¹ The italics are the Translator's. See also p. 73. No. 5.

[“I Shall become too Good.”¹

A curious objection, yet not an imaginary one. It may, however, be urged in two very different senses. It may be (a) the voice of a misguided humility, or (b) of sloth and cowardice.

(a) There are honest souls who shrink from receiving credit for goodness which they do not possess, and fear they may get it by being seen to communicate frequently. Now, the decree, amongst other benefits, has abolished this danger, by teaching, as its central truth, that frequent and daily Communion is open to *all* who are in grace and receive out of a religious motive, *whatever be their poverty in virtue*. Hence even daily Communion can no longer be a sign of special holiness. It is “not a reward of virtue,” as the decree says. Pius X. has disbanded the “crack” regiment of *âmes d’élite* as regards Eucharistic privileges. The answer, therefore, to the remark “I wish I was as holy as you are!” or the sneer “So you have become a saint!” is very easy: “We go to Communion, not *because* we are holy, but in order to become so.” If, however, the fear is that even this evident *desire* for improvement may procure us the esteem of others, it should be dismissed as a foolish one. To abstain from Communion for fear of seeming earnest is “Human Respect,” which the author will presently deal with.

(b) But the objection may spring from quite a different spirit. “I don’t want to be too good”—on account of the trouble and self-restraint it will entail. Is the danger of your becoming “too good” so certain? At all events, is it a *pressing* danger? The spirit of the objection points the other way. Then, is it really possible to be too good? Our Lord’s standard is fairly

¹ Added by the T.

high: "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father." Shall we surpass it?

The *real* danger is lest, while seeking to avoid the phantom Charybdis of excessive virtue, a sudden gust of dormant passion may wreck the bark of your Divine life on the Scylla of grievous sin. But now for dry reasons. The objection contains two false suppositions, is cowardly, and ungenerous to Our Lord.

1. *False Supposition No. 1.*—You seem to think that somehow or other frequent or daily Communion will force you into greater virtue *against your will*. That is impossible. God places a limit to the efficacy of His grace: it is never to violate your free will. Were you to communicate *hourly*, you would never improve *against your free choice*. So go ahead without fear on that score.

False Supposition No. 2.—You appear to think that over and above that amount of grace—obtainable by *infrequent* Communion—which would suffice to keep you *continually* out of mortal sin (and nothing less is to be thought of) there is a surplus of grace to be derived from *frequent* Communion *that you can afford to forgo* as a luxury beyond your ambition. How do you know this? Such a view betokens a certain presumptuous ignorance of the possibilities for evil lurking in your heart. With St. Augustine you can say—as all of us can—that except for God's grace there is no possible sin that you might not fall into. How have you calculated the precise amount of grace you need for meeting present temptations, and possibly very violent and unexpected ones in the future, of which you know nothing? The man of business does not say: "I will not take this opportunity of making plenty of money, lest I become too rich." Nor the hard worker: "I will cut down my food, lest I get too strong and healthy." For neither

knows what demands the future may make upon him.

2. *Cowardly*.—Why fear whatever advance in His love and service God may design for me later, as the fruit of frequent Communion? This is to project my present repugnance to greater virtue forward into the time when God's invitation to come up higher will infallibly be attended by plentiful grace to rise, and to rise willingly and cheerfully. I have not that grace now, and hence the seeming impossibility. God does not thrust the soul along some rugged by-path of greater virtue, and then leave it to itself. He goes with it hand in hand, in Holy Communion, and lays low the frowning mountain tops, and makes the rough places plain.

Or, again, it is objected: "I shall have to become a nun!" It is the same difficulty, and the answer is the same. But it is not self-evident that daily Communion will notably increase vocations. Many enter religion feeling too weak to cope with worldly temptations. But who could not save his soul in the world with daily Communion to help him? Again, the battle for Christ and His Church is more than ever passing into the hands of the lay democracy. May not widespread daily Communion be the God-sent means for recruiting from the laity an immense army of *thoroughly well-fed and valiant soldiers*!

3. *Ungenerous*.—In His Incarnation, Life, Passion, and Death the loving Master of the vineyard has humbled Himself, has toiled, bled, and died to *sanctify* us as well as to save us. Will you selfishly refuse Him the just fruit of His toil and sufferings by avoiding a practice which will enable you to yield it to His Sacred Heart? He has neither created nor redeemed you *by halves*. Even in death He emptied His Heart of its last drop of blood for you. In His Holy Sacrament,

whether you receive Him often or seldom, He gives you His *whole* Self : Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—all. *Quid ultra debui facere et non feci!* Do not grudge Him such return as—even *with* frequent Communion—your modest attempts at holier living are likely to secure for Him.]

“I am not Worthy.”

This sort of objection is, so to say, the devil's masterpiece! He has used it throughout the ages in order to keep away from Our Lord the needy souls, whom the Master in His goodness called to Him. Let us listen to St. Cyril of Alexandria: “Beware lest, under the pretext of reverence, the devil lay a fatal snare for your soul. . . . If it is your faults that keep you from Our Lord, when will you be worthy to approach Him? There is cause to fear lest you should forfeit entirely the holiness and the life which He brings to you. It is He Who cures all our complaints.”

1. The reverence which Our Lord requires of us is that of a patient for his physician, of a pauper for his generous benefactor, of the prodigal child for his ever-loving father. He it was Who, in the days of His mortal life, gathered round Him all the afflicted.

2. But now, what sort of worthiness can we be speaking of here? That which authorizes us to deal as an equal with some great personage? In this sense, Mary herself, in spite of her Immaculate Conception and the fullness of her grace, was not worthy to receive Our Lord. Or is it the worthiness belonging to high sanctity? In that case we shall have to conclude that the Eucharist was instituted for the exclusive benefit of a few hundred souls in each century!

Is it the worthiness and dignity conferred by the

state of grace? It is indeed great, and we too often forget this. We ought to say, for it is the simple truth: "Lord, I did not deserve to be made partaker of your Divine life; still less was I worthy to recover it, after losing it by mortal sin; yet if only I be possessed of this Divine life, it becomes my first duty to defend it against its enemies, and for that end to feed upon the 'Bread of Life.'"

3. Let us say humbly, as the Church suggests to us: *Domine non sum dignus!* But the Church puts these words into our mouth, not to keep us away from the Holy Table, but at the very moment when we draw nigh to it. One day St. Catherine of Siena—yes! even she—was saying, before Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy to come to Thee." "That is true, My child, but I am worthy to give Myself to thee."¹

Shortly, we go to Communion not because we are good, but because Our Lord is; not because we deserve it, but because we *need* it.

4. Why do you wait in order to become more worthy, more perfect, freer from venial faults? You are waiting to become warm before approaching the fire! For Jesus is the furnace of all fervour. If Communion does not increase it in you little by little, what else will?

**["It is a more Solid Form of Devotion to
correct one's Faults."]²**

A spiritual director who adopted this maxim in a sense at all depreciatory of frequent or even daily Communion would surely be the victim of a most obvious

¹ Cassian, Abbot of St. Victor Marseilles (A.D. 400), says of those who "do themselves great hurt" by abstaining, out of humility, from daily Communion; "by seeking to avoid pride, they fall into it, because, when at last they go to Communion, they think themselves worthy to participate."—*T.*

² Translator's addition.

fallacy. If it be a more solid form of piety to attend to the correction of one's faults, then, presumably, it is a necessary part of such more solid piety to use the most efficacious means for obtaining the grace needed for self-correction. unless, indeed, amendment is to be wondrously procured without the help of God's grace! Putting private ascetical theories aside as irrelevant, what does our Supreme Guide, the Church, say about this very practice of frequent and daily Communion? Let us see. *Decree, December 20, 1905*: "Most desirable," "so salutary and so pleasing to God," "most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church," "this devout and salutary practice." *Decree, February 14, 1906*: "This praiseworthy custom so acceptable to God." *Responsum, Sacred Congregation, of the Council, September 15, 1906*: "So praiseworthy and pleasing to God." *Letter of Sacred Congregation of Rites, April 10, 1907*: "This pious and most salutary practice of daily Communion." Letter of Pope Pius X. to the Rector of Mount St. Mary's College, England: "*The safeguard of solid piety*" (*solidissimæ pietatis præsidii*), etc. Daily Communion is declared in the great decree to be the source whence the faithful are to "derive strength to resist their sensual passions," the admitted *roots* of all our faults, "*to cleanse themselves from the stains of daily faults.*" These two last phrases are an explicit refutation of the fallacy underlying the above objection. We may well be excused for preferring the wisdom and experience of the Holy See, gathered throughout the centuries, to those of any private ascetical guides, however wise or holy.]

“I Fear falling into Routine.”

Meaning of this Objection.—This, surely, is the most widespread prejudice of all: “Communion is so holy a thing, the greatest that can be conceived! If I repeat it every day, it will cease to impress me. I shall not take the same pains about it, and shall not derive from it the same good.”

Answer.—This is a suspicious objection; it ignores three leading truths concerning the reception of the Sacrament; it proposes a remedy that is worse than the disease. We will develop these three points, and then decide upon the right view to be taken of the question of routine.

1. *It is a Suspicious Objection.*—The habit of going to Communion is in itself a very good habit. Our Lord and the Church press us to form it, and neither adds the caution: Beware of routine! No trace of such language is to be found in the exhortations of the Holy Fathers; while it is everywhere visible about the time of Jansenism, and in pious books written under the influence of that disastrous heresy. What the decree tells us is that we are not to communicate solely for the sake of conforming ourselves to prevailing custom.¹

2. *It ignores Three Leading Truths:*

(a) *The Efficacy Inherent in the Sacrament.*—The objection implies that fruitfulness depends solely, or at least chiefly, upon the activity of the communicant:

¹ Such is the interpretation given to the word *usus*, in Article 2 of the decree, by the best commentators. [To feel that we are kept constant in our Communions by the fact that others around us are communicating is one of the proper effects of good example, and in no way proves that we do not receive out of a wish to improve ourselves.—T.]

and activity is conceived under the form of *actual* and *sensible* devotion. This is to confuse Communion with an ordinary prayer. "No lack of disposition," writes Ven. de la Colombière, "is able to hinder the effects of the Sacrament, except that of mortal sin. Since, at each Communion, we receive an increase of merit and habitual grace, it follows inevitably that our Communion disposes us to reap benefit from the next, and that, consequently, the more Communions we make, the better prepared are we to profit by those which are yet to follow."

(b) *The Effect of a Habit.*—So far from its preventing the fruits of an action that is of its own nature good, it constitutes, of itself, an element of progress. Practice induces skill. Who pleads the better—the lawyer who lacks clients, or he who is continually practising at the Bar? In what way have you learnt to write, compose, paint . . . except by means of attempts that became less and less unskilful? Who communicates the best—the annual Easter communicant, or the soul that is united to Jesus every day? Look at them in church; see their daily lives! The truth is that the more fervent souls are also the more constant communicants.

(c) *The Primary Reason for Communion*—even for daily Communion—is Our Lord's desire and our soul's need. A fictitious reverence makes us think ourselves insufficiently prepared, and accordingly we omit our Communion. And we shall have improved matters greatly, forsooth, if, in consequence, we fall into the very sins which that Communion would have saved us from committing! That is, of course, a grand act of reverence to pay to Our Lord! Whereas your own experience has probably taught you the truth of St. Cyprian's saying: "The soul is prone to faint

away when Jesus is not there to sustain it by Communion."

3. *The Remedy proposed is Worse than the Disease.*—There is no better remedy for our spiritual languor than Holy Communion, one of the proper effects of which Sacrament, defined by the Council of Trent, is "to deliver us from our daily faults" and from the indisposition of soul which they produce. The time to refuse a tonic or cordial is surely not when one has the greatest need of it.

Instead of neglecting Communion, we should make it with humility and confidence; instead of suppressing it, we should make it better. That is the way we repair negligences in the performance of *other* spiritual exercises. Given a little good-will, we shall not find it difficult to shake off our sluggishness; but if we did not succeed in this, there would always remain the last resource of humbling ourselves the more in the sense of our extreme misery and weakness, and thus drawing down the Divine mercy, which regards the lowly.

4. *True View.*—In short, there is a routine for which we are not to blame, and one for which we are. The former kind arises from the weakness of our nature, from impressions which come from without, from bodily conditions, from familiarity with the most sacred things, etc. Our Lord knows this well; He is not offended thereat. Let us not be more exacting than He is. The other kind is due to our faults and carelessness. Of these the decree says: Venial sins are no bar to daily Communion. We must go to seek the remedy, our need of which is, under the present supposition, all the more evident. The benefit of Communion is assured, provided we approach with a right intention. Though, perchance, we may not

receive the maximum of good from it, we should not on that account deprive ourselves of the needful dose.

5. The same difficulty is often couched in these terms: "I make better Communion when I receive more rarely."

This is to be met by exactly the same answer. One may further remark that this objection considers nothing but the *impression* produced. Now, the question here is not one of impressions, but of *nutrition, alimentation*.

It is possible sometimes, as one may readily admit, that a person may experience more lively sentiments of piety when he receives but seldom. But the real point to be ascertained is whether the habitual condition of his soul would not be better were he to receive Communion frequently. "One or two familiar comparisons will solve this problem. It is in the same way that a man coming into the house from an icy temperature, and entering the apartment where you have been warming yourself for some time, will suddenly experience a sensation of warmth and general comfort which you yourself do not. Similarly, a man, after passing two or three days without tasting food, devours with relish the coarse bread which would disgust you. All the same, these sharp transitions from one state to its opposite, though more exciting, are not as valuable as the peace and insensible well-being produced by an equable régime."¹

A theologian of the sixteenth century, Father Christopher Madrid, S.J.,² who wrote by the command and under the inspiration of St. Ignatius, adopts the following line of reasoning with one who proposes to

¹ Cros, S.J., "Le Confesseur de l'Enfance," 3rd. edit., p. 320.

² "De frequenti usu Sanctissimi Eucharistiæ Sacramenti libellus," Naples, 1556, probably the first treatise on the subject since the opening of the Council of Trent.

omit some Communion in order to secure better dispositions later on: "Good! But whence will you obtain these better dispositions? From the grace of God? Ask for it at once; it cannot be denied you, since it is the good of your soul that is at stake. Do you expect to get it by your own efforts? What a simpleton you must be! All your strivings are not worth the Communion you are missing. Then go to Communion."

And one might add: How can your going to Communion interfere with your disposing yourself better for the next one, as you desire?

6. *Preventives of Routine.*—(a) Offer to Our Lord each day some slight act of self-denial in preparation for the morrow's Communion.

(b) On retiring to rest and at rising think of the happiness of Communion, and give vent to your desire for it in ejaculatory prayers, such as the following:

"Dear Jesus, come to live and to reign in my heart. O Mary Immaculate, my loving mother, bless your child, and prepare my heart to receive your Son Jesus."

(c) Take pains over your preparation and thanksgiving, as stated above.

"I am not Devout Enough."

1. You start from a false principle. Daily Communion is not a matter of devotion, but of *nourishment*, to meet a want of our soul. The end Our Lord has in view is to sustain us, to keep us from fainting. Besides, what is devotion compared to that preservation in the state of grace which is promised us?

2. *What do you mean by devotion? Are you not confounding substantial devotion with sensible devotion?* “Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”¹ So Jesus tells us. Consider your Communion good if they keep you away from sin, and not because you shed consoling tears, or your bosom throbs with Divine love.

True devotion is a spiritual act of the will; the senses can have no part in it, as they have, for instance, in the feeling of admiration which comes over us on beholding some beautiful cathedral.

3. “First bread and then honey.” This saying of St. Ignatius should teach us not to risk losing the principal thing on the plea that its accessories are wanting. How many souls are perishing with hunger because they have omitted Communion for fear of being wanting in devotion. Beware of this trick of Satan.

4. It is by frequently receiving that you best dispose yourself for experiencing even sensible devotion. Have confidence. Our Lord will in this way reward from time to time your holy desires and earnest efforts. But such constant facility in prayer is not commonly our lot during this life of trial.

“I Feel Nothing.”

1. This is a most incorrect way of stating the case. Communion is not ordained for being *felt*, any more than are our meals, but for producing an effect. The true question is this: Do I approach in the dispositions required by the Church? If I do, the act is

¹ Matt. vii. 21.

always fruitful. Do I strive to go beyond the minimum that is sufficient? If so, the fruit will be proportionately greater.

2. One must be resolutely content to feel nothing, and aim at a piety of *principle*, not of sentiment. "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed," Our Lord said to St. Thomas.

There is greater generosity and more meritorious faith in persevering in spite of a lack of sensible devotion.

3. Make use of this experience for becoming more humble. Acknowledge that you do not deserve these sensible favours with which Our Lord sometimes rewards the generosity of His servants.

Read, "Imitation of Christ," iv. 15.

**"I should have to Keep too strict a Guard
over Myself."**

1. Another scarecrow of the Jansenists. They have gone to the length of writing that the day upon which Communion has been received must be spent wholly with Our Lord in the Garden of Olives. And worthy Christians, not feeling the strength to do this, have kept away from the Holy Table, and the devil has gained his point. The Church and the Saints have never spoken after this fashion. "I should never deny myself suitable recreation," says St. Francis de Sales, "on the day when I had communicated."

2. Communion adds nothing to the commandments of God and of the Church, or to the duties of one's state of life. It was not instituted to create new duties, but to help us to fulfil all duties. You will attend to them more carefully, your conscience will

be more delicate; but these duties already existed. Together with clearer light, you will have greater strength—a double benefit for your soul. On the days when we have received Communion we are not bound to anything more on its account than we are on other days. No doubt it is praiseworthy to recall to mind the Divine visit of the morning, and to express one's thankfulness to Our Lord, but this is not of obligation. It is not necessary to think of the meals we have taken; and yet it is owing to the strength they have infused into us that we are able to devote ourselves to work.

3. Joy and expansion of heart are the rewards of a pure soul, the natural fruits of the presence of Jesus. "Holy Communion," says St. Thomas, "gladdens the soul. Jesus causes the soul that frequently unites itself to Him to feel increasingly the sweetness of His yoke."

4. Is it lawful, people sometimes ask, to go frequently to Communion and yet attend *balls* and *theatres*?

The question is put wrongly. These worldly gatherings have to be considered, not in any particular relation to Holy Communion, but in the light of general principles concerning occasions of sin.¹ What is allowable on days when one has not received Communion is also allowable on days when one has; while what is forbidden on Communion days is also forbidden on others.

In this particular matter, Communion tends to

¹ As the present pages are for priests, we have not thought it necessary to give these principles here. They are to be found in all works on moral theology. But it is to be noticed that, in dealing with penitents, a distinction needs to be drawn between those whose duties necessitate their joining in worldly amusements, and those who engage in them without any necessity, for mere pleasure's sake.

make the conscience more sensitive. Intimacy with Our Lord gives the soul a clearer insight into the impossibility of serving two masters, and the impropriety, to say the least, of tarnishing purity and prejudicing the life of the soul. From that moment either the person will give up more frequent Communion, as involving too much self-denial and offering joys of which he feels himself undeserving, or else he will break entirely with the allurements of the world.

Experience proves that if a soul be resolved to avoid grievous sin, and yet still delude itself as to the risks which it runs of falling into it, Holy Communion will, more than aught else, give it the generosity needed for making the sacrifice, and will beget a distaste for worldly pleasures. In the writer's booklet, "For Children of Mary," the example is quoted of a certain Marie Eustelle. Another instance, given by Père Cros, S.J., may here be added: "I know a worthy parish priest who *completely banished* an abuse, in the matter of dances, from a large parish, by adopting a plan diametrically opposed to that which had been followed by his predecessor. The latter used to refuse absolution. His successor granted it, advised Communion, and requested penitents to return the following Saturday. People would continue to accuse themselves of having attended the dances. But the priest continued to absolve, send to the Communion-rails, and urge a return to the Sacraments the next week. Very soon people ceased to mention the dances. So the priest took to questioning: 'And how about the dances?' The reply was: 'Oh, I don't care to attend them any more.'"

Human Respect.

1. Beyond doubt, we have here one of the greatest obstacles to Communion, particularly for men. The most effectual way to combat it is to persuade men—for example, members of the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, of Guilds, Sodalities, etc.—to communicate in a body on certain days. It will also be advisable to speak to them of the *reasons* which should bring them to Communion, and then ask the more generous ones among them to attract others towards the Holy Table by force of example.

2. If it be deemed advisable to fight this enemy from the pulpit, this might be done by inveighing forcibly against the contemptible cowardice of being ashamed to appear at the Communion-rails for fear of what foolish people may say.

Considerations that serve in other matters would be suitable in this case.

“Other people do not go to Communion!” Well, that’s their affair. Do you yourself wish to keep your soul innocent and peaceful?

You are afraid of what people will say about it?

You would not risk your watch or your health out of regard to popular criticism, then why expose your soul?

You are ashamed of your God? Take care He be not ashamed of you on the day of account!

Do you want to free yourself from this foolish and cowardly sentiment? Here is the way. Attack the phantom boldly—that is to say, go openly to Communion on several consecutive days.

Come, now, be brave. . . . You will be in very good company. Here one might quote examples of notable Christians who communicated constantly.

EFFECTS OF COMMUNION.

PRIESTS should bear in mind the grave warning of the Roman Catechism: "That as regards what can be said concerning the virtue and effects of this wonderful Sacrament, there is no class of the faithful for whom the knowledge of such truths is not important, and for whom it should not be deemed highly necessary." (Chap. xx.)

*The difficulty has been raised, whether by extolling the fruits of Communion, one does not run the risk of depreciating, and even of causing people to neglect, other means of grace and progress in virtue.*¹

The answer is simple. The custom of receiving Communion in no way excludes the use of such means.

Far from discouraging such use, it is, on the contrary, a strong incentive thereto; and, what is the chief point, Communion excels them all in efficacy. So let us stand boldly upon the teaching of the decree: ". . . *it is plain that by frequent and daily reception of the Holy Eucharist union with Christ is fostered, the spiritual life more abundantly increased, the soul more richly endowed with virtues,*" etc. (Article 6).

"Si scires donum Dei."²

This word fell one day from the lips of Jesus, with the result of stirring to its inmost depths the heart of

¹ See objection: "It is more solid," etc., p. 95.

² John iv. 10.

a poor sinful Samaritan woman. "Ah!" He said to her, "if thou didst know the gift of God, and Who He is that saith to thee, 'Give Me to drink,' thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." Thus Our Lord gave this soul to understand how ardent a desire would have been excited in her heart by a more perfect knowledge of the Divine life which He had come to bestow upon the world.

"Ah! if you did but know the gift of God," Our Lord would say to us to-day; "if the Eucharistic veils were to be torn aside, you would not rest satisfied with a bare remembrance of the gift or with acts of thanksgiving for it. No, you would realize that I am there to enrich your soul, and yet you remain in poverty! Only realize what I have done, and you will hasten at once to come and draw from the fountains which My wounds have opened for you; and I, on My part, will give you living water wherewith to slake the thirst of your souls."

There are two ways of appreciating the gift of God: the first by weighing well the love which Jesus manifests for us in the Eucharist, and the obstacles over which He triumphs; the second by pondering over the signal benefits which Holy Communion confers upon us. Perhaps the latter method will appeal most to us.

We will take as the theme to be here developed those words of the decree: "It is plain that by the frequent or daily reception of the Holy Eucharist—

- "1. Union with Christ is increased;
- "2. The spiritual life more abundantly nourished;
- "3. The soul more richly endowed with virtues;
- "4. And an even surer pledge of everlasting happiness bestowed" (Article 6).

I.

UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST.

“O Sacred Banquet in which Christ is taken!”

1. We all know the proverb, “Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you what manner of man you are.” How wonderful the thought! A man consorts with God, and this association reaches a degree of intimacy to which mere human love aspires in vain: the Being loved makes Itself food . . . and remedy—food that is all satisfying, and a remedy that is universal.

Science tells us of certain substances which contain the wherewith to build up our strength, because they furnish the body with all the elements necessary for its life; quacks, playing upon popular credulity, foist upon us remedies calculated to cure maladies of every sort. Whatever be the worth of these professions, the Flesh of Jesus is in very truth an abundant spiritual nourishment of this kind, capable of repairing all the losses of our souls—it is the true panacea, healing all their weaknesses and ailments.

2. “Let us compare the happiness of those who in the days of His mortal life received the Saviour into their houses, or who received their health by touching His robes or the hem of His garment, with the happiness enjoyed by such as receive Him into their hearts, now that He rejoices in immortal glory. Though we may rightly admit the blessedness of the former, yet are we not far more blest ourselves, we to whom He comes in order to heal the wounds of our souls and enrich them with His choicest gifts, by uniting Himself to them?”¹

¹ Roman Catechism, chap. xx.

3. With a view to conceiving a higher appreciation of the favour done to us, we may, like the Fathers of the Church, have recourse to a few comparisons :

“Two pieces of wax melted together become one. In like manner, he who receives Communion becomes so closely united to Christ that Christ is in him and he is in Christ ” (St. Cyril of Alexandria).

“A substance immersed in molten gold becomes clotted with gold. This is what the mystery of Communion effects in the soul after a still more perfect manner. . . . Those who have partaken of the Blood of Christ resemble the angels, being clothed in the royal robe of Christ ; or, rather, it should be said, clothed with the King Himself ” (St. John Chrysostom).

But Jesus Christ Himself has sought for a term of comparison far beyond the sphere of created things, and tells us : “ *As . . . I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same shall live by Me.* ”¹

4. The theology of the Eucharist, moreover, has been successfully condensed by St. Thomas into this formula : “It is a progressive transformation into Christ —*conversio in Christum.*”²

Before his time, St. Augustine had put into the mouth of Our Lord these words : “I am the food of formed men ; grow, and you will eat of Me. And you will never change Me into yourselves, as happens with your bodily nourishment, but, rather, it is you who will be changed into Me.”³

¹ John vi. 58.

² IV. Sent., d. 12, q. 2, a. 2, q. 1.

³ Lib. vii., “Confess,” cap. 10.

II.

SUPPORT OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Together with St. Thomas, whose expressions have been adopted by the Council of Florence, we may say : "Whatever effects nourishment can produce in the body, such as supporting and increasing life, repairing strength, and imparting a healthy tone to the whole organism—all these are similarly produced by the Sacrament in our spiritual life, of which it is the food. *Sustentat, reparat, auget, et delectat.*"

Support (*Sustentat*).—Material food maintains the body and prevents its dying. Spiritual food supports the soul and preserves it from the death of mortal sin (see above, Needs of the Spiritual Life, p. 50).

Restoration (*Reparat*).—Watch the traveller, the artisan, the labourer. After a long journey or heavy toil, they pause by the roadside, in the workshop, in the field. They are bent on seeking in wholesome nourishment the strength they have lost through fatigue; and, after refreshing themselves, they resume their respective occupations.

So, too, on the journey of life, the Christian soul, wearied by the struggle against passions and by the worry of business, feels itself at times reduced to the very limits of endurance. The soul, too, must pause awhile to renew its forces at the Source of supernatural life; and, refreshed once more by the Bread of Life, courageously pursues its journey towards eternity, and bravely fights the enemies which beset its path (see the type of the miraculous bread conveyed by the angel to Elias, 3 Kings xix.).

Development (*Auget*).—Theologians discuss how it is that Communion secures this increase of life. To

understand their reply to this question we need to bear in mind that in every living being three things may be distinguished—the principle of life itself, the principle of its activities, and vital action. In the case of the soul, rendered God-like by baptism, the principle of life is known as “sanctifying grace”; the immediate principles of action are the theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and the gifts of the Holy Ghost; while the vital acts themselves proceeding from these virtues are called “good works.”

Now, Communion acts directly upon sanctifying grace by causing a fresh outpouring of the same. According to several authorities, this outpouring is more plentiful in the case of the Eucharist than with any of the other Sacraments. It exerts a very special influence upon charity, the queen of virtues. The Sacramental grace proper to the Eucharist has the effect of perfecting us in the love of God, viewed as an habitual inclination of the soul, and of enabling us to elicit acts of that virtue.¹

By a fortunate counter-blow, Communion correlatively weakens the baser life within us—the dangerous tendencies of our fallen nature. St. John tells us that the roots of sin consist of the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three springs of evil are easily reducible to one—viz., inordinate love of self, or selfishness. It is against this that the chief fruit of Communion is aimed, for it draws down into our souls the fire of Divine love. Tradition attributes to the reception of Our Saviour’s flesh a specific virtue for curbing the irregular cravings of the flesh. “When Jesus Christ dwells within us,” says St. Cyril of Alexandria, “He

¹ “Res hujus Sacramenti est caritas, non solum quantum ad habitum, sed etiam quantum ad actum” (St. Thomas iii., q. 79, a. 4).

quells the rebellion of the flesh, strengthens piety calms the tempest of the soul, heals the sick, and restores those who have been crushed.”¹

St. John Chrysostom attributes to the Sacrament the same power: “It quenches the ardour of evil passions, and relieves all the burns caused, not by the heat of the sun, but by the fiery darts of the enemy.”²

Experience daily confirms the striking connection between frequent approach to the Holy Table and the successful issue of the most violent and critical struggles for chastity. “If it be true that medicine of the preventive sort is the best because it spares us a sad experience, we must admit that this Divine Sacrament is *the sovereign specific for souls*. For instead of waiting for the outburst of that terrible evil—sin, it wards it off and checks it in germ by strengthening the life of grace with the Divine cordial of love.”³

Joy (*Delectat*).—The vitality imparted to our bodily system by solid nourishment brings along with it a certain sense of comfort which inclines us to joyfulness no less than to action. Similarly, Jesus comes to put truth into our minds and order into our affections; He brings with Him that peace and joy of which He is the source; He causes us to realize the truth of His words: “My yoke is sweet and My burden is light.” The secret of the joy of soul which Communion causes is that it increases charity and also moves us to love God. “An ardent and active charity inclines us to live anew, to love more, to grow in love, and never to cease loving; and this fervour is a source of delights which weaken the attractions of temptations. . . . Venial sin makes us slack in the practice of virtue and

¹ In Joan., lib. iv., cap. 17.

² In Joan. Romil., 46, N. 4.

³ Bellamy, “Les Effets de la Communion.”

in good works; the Eucharist removes such slackness, and gives back to us our original fervour."¹

Communion, therefore, is a source of joy. Such is the constant teaching of the Fathers, endorsed by the liturgy.² For the reason that the Eucharist is *par excellence* the Sacrament of charity, it is also the Sacrament of supernatural joy. It dispels sadness and despondency, makes us experience supernatural pleasures, and inebriates the soul with the gentle sweetness of the Divine goodness. It is not strength alone that it gives us, but heartiness as well. Taking the Eucharist into account, we can hardly wonder at the dauntless courage of the martyrs. They had taken care to fortify themselves with the Body of Christ. Need we marvel, either, at the delicate purity of so many virgins, who, during the period when the passions are most lively, and although beset with snares, keep both body and mind unsullied. It is in Communion that they conceive a distaste for sensual pleasures, and become inebriated with the love of their Saviour.

What may well astonish us, however, is that anyone should be able to counteract the Divine forces placed at his disposal, and be capable of depriving himself of the joys which accompany the presence of Jesus. How deeply seated must be our tendency towards sin! Yet that is the very reason why we should have more constant recourse to Holy Communion, and prepare for it with greater care. Wholly Divine though this nourishment and remedy is, it usually produces its effect—just as bodily food does—

¹ Merkelbach, "The Fruits of Holy Communion," *Revue Ecclésiastique de Liège*, May, 1908, pp. 360, 363.

² *Panem de cœlo præstitisti eis, omne delectamentum. . . . Dedit et tristibus sanguinis poculum (Off. Corp. Christi)*

only by degrees, and through continued use. Our lack of preparations, or the faults we wilfully commit during Communion, diminish in intensity these effects of grace, which are so desirable for us, and place hindrances in the paths of their operation.

III.

RICHNESS IN VIRTUE.

Mens impletur gratia, the sacred liturgy tells us.

In other cases, Our Divine Saviour bestows the treasures of His grace in a certain measure; here He gives them, as it were, without limit—*velut effudit*, to adopt the expression of the Council of Trent. He imparts the graces needed by every soul, and in every circumstance of life. Here Our Saviour cries out to everyone: "Come to me . . . and I will refresh you!"

It has already been stated how Holy Communion, through its action upon charity, stimulates us to all those good works by means of which the latter manifests itself.

[*Here the preacher, according as he is addressing a miscellaneous audience or devout persons, should dwell upon particular virtues, the practice of which is fostered by Communion.*]

A. For an Average Audience:

Are you tempted to Pride?—Jesus, humbling Himself in the Eucharist to the point of becoming invisible—although He is all in all—will fill you with esteem and love of humility.

Are you prone to Anger?—Jesus will enable you to control its outbursts.

Are you a Slave to Sensuality?—Jesus led a life of poverty, experienced hunger and thirst, and lived a

virgin. He will inspire you with His love for holy purity, and with the strength needed for its practice.

Are you Spiteful or Hard towards your Neighbour?—Jesus wills that we should forgive those who cause us pain; He forbids us to judge our brethren, and sets us the example of tender pity for the sinner. In the Eucharist, as on the cross of Calvary, He teaches us to forgive.

B. For Pious Audiences.—It is useful to point out to souls who are called to a life of perfection some of the virtues the constant exercise of which supplies an excellent test of the fruit produced by frequent Communion.

1. *The Spirit of Prayer.*—Ease and quickness in recalling the thought of God, of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and in turning to Him by means of ejaculatory prayers; a taste for prolonging spiritual exercises.

2. *The Spirit of Self-sacrifice.*—A thoroughly Christian life calls for self-denial. If I am more generous in exercising the same in the humble duties of everyday life, in the trials sent me by Divine Providence, this is a sign that Communion is bearing fruit.

3. *A more Scrupulous Charity.*—If you are more ready to bear with the shortcomings of your neighbour, to forgive his wrong-doing, to do him a service at cost to yourself, be quite sure that your Communion is most profitable to you; for it is by such signs that one knows the true follower of Jesus.

4. *Increasing Desire for Holy Communion.*—“They that eat Me, shall yet hunger”¹—so truly will they find therein every kind of flavour, even as the Jews did in partaking of the manna. The heavenly Bread cannot be relished at the same time as earthly dainties.

¹ Ecclus. xxiv. 29.

C. For Every Kind of Audience.—Let us notice some words of that Apostle of the Eucharist, Monseigneur de Ségur: “Holy Communion, if well made, if frequently and, above all, daily received, is the sweet and powerful preserver of the spirit of faith, of worthy prayer, of interior recollection, of Christian detachment, holy purity, humility, meekness, and patience; it is the mainspring of zeal, fervour, devotion to Mary, loyalty to the Pope and to the Church, and of charity towards the poor; it is the secret of peace of soul, and, in a word, it is the life and support of all Christianity.”¹

IV.

PLEDGE OF ETERNAL GLORY.

1. The Eucharist reveals the highest ambition of the Heart of Jesus—namely, to give Himself entirely, and to share His own bliss with the faithful soul. Here on earth this gift is unavoidably limited by the circumstances of our exile and by the narrowness of our heart's dispositions. In heaven all barriers will be removed, and God will be all in all to His elect, as St. Paul expresses it. Now, Jesus has declared that the Eucharistic union is but a prelude to the beatific. “He that eateth My flesh . . . hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”² His Divine flesh sows in our flesh a germ of immortality in virtue of which we shall one day shake off from us the dust of the tomb and rise transformed into a higher life.

2. Here we have indeed a strong prop to our hope! After a few short years of sacrifices and trials, during which Jesus becomes my daily support, I shall partake of His happiness and His glory; He has promised it.

¹ “Le Chrétien Vivant en Jésus,” chap. viii.

² John vi. 55.

The union begun on earth is to be perfected in eternity. Let me be of good heart, then. Jesus is coming to me to-morrow to bless me for my struggles of to-day. That will strengthen me anew for further battles. Soon I shall be with Jesus, and gaze upon Him unveiled.

3. Let us desire and pray that we may be strengthened in our last moments with the Holy Viaticum. Those moments are sometimes terrible with memories of the past, with present agony, and with fear for the future. Like a faithful friend, Jesus comes in person to reassure us, to protect us against the enemy, to purify our souls and to give them a pledge of salvation: *futura gloriæ nobis pignus datur!*

CONCLUSION.

1. It has been necessary to confine ourselves to a few leading thoughts calculated to convince us of the extent and plentifulness of the saving fruits which lie concealed in the sacred mysteries. The Roman Catechism warns us of our incompetence: "Since the benefits which Communion brings to us are almost endless, it is impossible to enumerate them all in detail.¹ "In truth," writes P. Tesnière, "Holy Communion possesses but one property and produces but one effect—that of supernatural life. Yet this life is made up of so many elements, so many virtues, so many benefits; it manifests itself so variously in the personal sanctification of man and in all his duties to God and to his neighbour; it can increase, soar up-

¹ "Quoniam immensæ ejus utilitates et fructus nulla oratione explicari possunt, unus aut alter locus a pastoribus tractandus erit, ut ostendant quæ in sacrosanctis illis mysteriis bonorum omnium copia et affluentia inclusa sit"—(Catech. Roman).

wards, attain to so great a height, reaching even to eternal life, that in showing forth this single effect of 'eternal life' one might divide and subdivide its excessive richness, and deal with each element in that glorious life as a separate fruit of Holy Communion."¹

This being so, can there be any need, dear brethren, of bidding you to desire Holy Communion, and not to miss one single opportunity for securing the blessings which it brings? Unfortunately, just because you receive Communion too seldom, you are still ignorant of the blessings offered you, and have so feeble a desire for them.

You are entreated to make a trial. Rely upon the promises of Jesus; you will have life and will have it more abundantly.

Trust to the teaching of the Church, who promises you. . . .

Trust to the experience of so many souls. . . .

2. Notice these words of the decree: ". . . it is plain that by the frequent and daily reception of the Eucharist . . . the spiritual life is more abundantly sustained," etc. (Article 6). This is the reason why the Church urges us so strongly not to be satisfied with receiving rarely.

Once Communion becomes a daily practice, its effects accumulate from day to day; the soul is re-invigorated ere it has had time to become thoroughly weakened and exhausted, and it finds in Communion not merely wherewithal to sustain itself, but also the means of growth and development in the true life.

"The Eucharist possesses a practical superiority over the other Sacraments in this, that it imparts to

¹ Tesnière, "Somme," t. ii., confér. 9.

us grace in more frequent draughts, if not in more copious ones. It resembles a spring of which the waters, albeit not purer than those from other sources, are nevertheless more easy of access, and in freer use.

“For it is to the Eucharist that the regular function belongs of replenishing the river of Divine life in the souls of men. Hence it is this Sacrament which swells that stream more abundantly by contributing its waters in greater volume than any other Sacrament.”¹

3. Here, then, we have the secret of spiritual progress. By means of daily nourishment, the child grows and develops until it becomes an adult, full of vigour and life. Let the soul, from infancy, draw its supernatural vitality from the Eucharist, and that Sacrament will give growth to its piety, energy, and zeal. Such growths may even reach those marvellous developments which we admire in an Agnes, a Xavier, a Teresa, or a Francis de Sales.

Though a time will come when it is no longer possible to preserve our bodily forces in full vigour, and to protect them against death, the Christian, nevertheless, can during the present life grow in virtue and in merit without any limitation.

May you, brethren, thus grow from Communion to Communion, until the eternal Communion of Heaven.

N.B. In order to enable the preacher to supplement the above plan of instruction with the consideration and development of the effects of Communion, as these are set forth in theological treatises, we give on p. 121 a complete list of the said effects :

¹ Bellamy, “Les Effets de la Communion,” p. 23.

EFFECTS "EX OPERE OPERATO."

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <i>Upon the Soul.</i> | { | 1. Increase of sanctifying grace. |
| | | 2. Special action upon the virtue of charity. |
| | | 3. Cleansing from venial sins. |
| | | 4. Quieting of concupiscence. |
| | | 5. Abundant actual graces. |
| | | 6. Devotion and spiritual joy. |
- Upon the Body.*—Pledge of a glorious resurrection.

EFFECTS "EX OPERE OPERANTIS."

1. Remission of temporal punishment.
2. The *greater or lesser amount* of the fruit *ex opere operato*.

SOCIAL EFFECT.

Union and charity among the faithful members of the mystic body of Jesus Christ.

Others classify these effects by distinguishing between the *principal fruit* and the *secondary fruits*, as follows:

Principal Fruit.—Habitual grace viewed as the source of charity which transforms us into Christ and unites us closely to Him.

Secondary Fruits.—1. Considered in their entirety: the Eucharist as the support, increase, refreshment, and source of joy in the supernatural life.

2. Remedy for sin.

3. Restraint of concupiscence.

4. Pledge of eternal life and of glorious resurrection.

Reading.—Merkelbach, "The Fruits of Holy Communion," *Revue Ecclesiastique de Liège*, 1906-1908. As far as we have noticed, the present subject has nowhere been more thoroughly treated,

Lahousse, S.J., "Tractatus de Eucharistia," Thes. 22 and 23. Bruges, Beyaert.

Mahieu, "Le Pain de Vie." Bruges, Beyaert. The author is the best exponent of the assistance given by the Eucharist for arriving at perfection.

Tesnière, "Nature et Effets de la Communion" ("Somme Eucharistique," tom. ii.). A most copious treatise on Communion, in which the Sacrament is viewed in every possible relation.

COMMUNIONS OF CHILDREN.

This topic might be discussed before parents, or—with some modification—before the children themselves. The last two sections supply material for an instruction on the Eucharist as a remedy for the passions.

THE action of Holy Communion, here treated in reference to one particular passion—viz., impurity—and to the most critical age, is an equally powerful remedy for every passion, and at all ages.

Thrice in one year has Rome raised its voice: "Let children come to the Holy Table as often as possible, even every day."¹

¹ This "mot d'ordre" is couched in the following terms:

"1. Frequent and daily communion is to be promoted . . . especially . . . in all Christian establishments of whatever kind for the training of youth" (Article 7 of the decree of December 20, 1905).

"2. They will take special care to excite a lively desire of daily Communion in the innocent hearts of children, which are free from *vain fears*, during the period of preparation for first Communion; let them see that they make their Communion as soon as they are capable, and repeat the act, if possible, every day" (Instruction to members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, approved by Pius X., July 27, 1906).

"3. In accordance with Article 1 of the decree, frequent Communion is to be recommended even to younger children, who, once they have been admitted to their first Communion, according to the prescriptions of the Roman Catechism (chap. iv., N. 63), ought not to be hindered from its frequent reception, but rather encouraged thereto, to the rejection of a contrary practice anywhere prevailing" (Answer of the Sacred Congregation of the Council, September 15, 1906).

See foot-note of Translator to "Chief Passages" from the above Roman Answer, p. 14.

There can be no doubt that, if all the faithful are recommended to communicate every day, children are recommended to do the same for very special reasons.

This direction given by the Pope places upon those parents who are loyal to the voice of the Church a double duty—that of putting *no hindrance* to the accomplishment of the Holy Father's wishes, and, on the contrary, of *promoting* the same with all their power. They will throw themselves into the task of fulfilling these duties with the more earnestness, according as they are themselves more thoroughly convinced of the reasons which have prompted such urgent and repeated appeals.

Two reasons at once suggest themselves: (1) The young are the *reserve of the Church*; (2) they have *more immediate* need of Communion, either for *preserving* holy purity or for *regaining* it.

I.

1. It is during the time of youth that habits are formed. A certain number, if not all, of those who have practised daily Communion during that period will remain faithful to it.

All, at least, will have had instilled into them *correct notions* on the subject. Here, undoubtedly, we have an efficacious means of preparing legions of communicants for the future. The dream of the Church is to behold, not merely a certain number of very constant communicants in the midst of a society that neglects Communion, but to see all those who claim to be Catholics acting consistently with their profession, up to the point of communicating very frequently.

2. In youth the physical constitution is formed, and what builds it up is not a viand taken at distant intervals on days of feasting, but *regular* nourishment,

daily diet. So, too, we need Christians who live in the state of grace, not merely for some days or on occasion of some festival, but continually. Only frequent Communion can secure *continuity* of the Divine life.

3. How grievously mistaken are those persons who argue: This child will not receive so frequently later on; hence there can be no good in its doing so now!

By what right do you make up your mind beforehand that it will afterwards receive more rarely? Do you not see that it is precisely in order that the child *may* communicate daily afterwards that the Church urges it to begin in childhood?¹

It is in great measure because children have received Communion too seldom in their early years that nowadays so many Christians who have reached their majority hold themselves so sadly aloof from the Holy Table.

At all events, you wish that child to be virtuous in after-life? The best security for this is a pure youth. And how can that be better secured than by means of Communion? The fact that future difficulties are foreseen, instead of being a reason for *not* receiving Communion in childhood, is surely one reason the more for doing it.²

A man who is soon to take up his abode in some pestilent climate is all the more anxious to fortify his constitution with greater powers of resistance by adopting a healthy, strengthening diet.³

¹ By preventing the child now from forming a strong habit of Eucharistic practice, you yourself are helping to create the very difficulty which you anticipate in the future.

² It is mere common sense to "make hay while the sun shines."—*Translator.*

³ Another refutation of this prejudice may be seen in the author's "Les Vacances," 2nd edit., p. 11. See also Translator's "Notes on Daily Communion," 2nd edit., p. 73, N. 3, and his "Parents and Communion of Children," *passim.*

II.

In the sight of God the souls of children stand in two differing categories—those who have preserved their innocence or who live habitually in the state of grace, and those who frequently live in mortal sin. Daily Communion is *equally recommended to both classes*.

A. For preserving Purity.

1. How beautiful is this virtue of holy purity, which leads us to control the extravagant or guilty cravings of the body! God, who has made it a strict obligation, causes us to find therein a sort of balm and preservative of all that is best in man—vigour and comeliness, clear-sightedness of mind, tenderness of heart, maturity and wisdom beyond his years . . . true joyousness. In short, it is the glory of life. Our Lord loved the innocent young man. . . . There is no one who does not respect and covet this virtue.

2. And yet how delicate it is, and how difficult to preserve! It is like some flower that withers at a breath, or like thin glass that is shattered by the lightest blow.

The child has to protect this fragile treasure just at a period when its understanding and will are at their weakest, and in all its inexperience of the world . . . when its mental balance is liable to disturbance, when within its heart the animal seems to be stifling the angel—at a time when all around so many scandals, speeches, or sights conspire to rob it of its tender virtue. Then many lose heart, and cry: “I cannot keep chaste!” What weapon are we to place in the hands of these young wrestlers, that they may gain the victory? Shall we talk to them of duty?

But that duty is so painful! Of conscience? Its voice is wearisome, and at times the cry of passion is so deafening. Of honour? But there are some who place it in wallowing in the mire! Of health? But people persuade themselves that it can be reconciled with vice. Of natural pride and lofty superiority to baseness? But pride—and the rash confidence in self which often attends it—is proverbially the forerunner of a fall. These are all barriers, no doubt; but how frail for withstanding the pressure of the passions! Something more is needed, and experience proves it. Here it is.

3. In an unequal contest it is the stronger that prevails. The child is the weaker one. Place at his side, place within him a stronger than he, the All-Strong Himself, by frequent Communion, and victory is certain. Jesus, Who was able to drive devils from the bodies of the possessed, will surely be able to prevent an entrance into a heart that has become His.

“It is all very well to call out to souls: ‘Struggle on, fight, be brave!’ But that does not suffice. One must *arm* them, *support* them, *make them strong and victorious* by clothing them with the protecting armour of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.”¹

4. And this is what we must do particularly for children, in order to forestall the inroads of passion, and to consolidate the reign of Our Lord at a time when He is still the Master of their hearts. This is why the Church bids them go to Him each day. She remembers the cry of the Sacred Heart: *Sinite parvulos ad me venire*. Jesus would be wounded to the quick were these favourites of His Heart repelled,

¹ St. Cyprian, Ep. 44, ad Corn. Pap.

and would rebuke the unintelligent apostles who should be responsible for this.

Do not say, forsooth, "These children are too young to receive Communion so often." The *Church* says: Just *because* they are so young, they ought to receive it. They are alive! Then, let that life grow, be strengthened and abound. In her eyes lack of age is no disqualification; only lack of grace is that. During the early ages they used to give particles of the Eucharist to infants; and the Council of Trent, in refusing to condemn this practice, merely declares it to be *unnecessary*.¹

B. To regain It.

1. It is a fundamental principle frequently laid down by the Saints and doctors that the Flesh of Our Saviour contains a special virtue for purifying the flesh of fallen man.

"It is," says Albert the Great, "as natural for the Flesh of Christ to quench the ardours of evil concupiscence as it is for water to extinguish fire."

St. Alphonsus Liguori adds: "There is no passion, however violent, however inveterate, that can hold out against daily Communion."²

2. It is inconceivable that a soul enslaved by vice

¹ "Mortal sin alone can prevent us reaching heaven. Now, the chief means ordained by Jesus Christ for preserving us from such sin is Holy Communion. Hence it is most important to admit children early to Communion. . . . As a parish priest, I often admitted to Communion children who had not yet entered upon their eighth year; and I have never had cause to repent it" (Mgr. Abett, Bishop of Sion, Switzerland, in a Pastoral Letter on Frequent Communion in 1907). [*Cf.* "Stories of Child Communicants," p. 164.—7.]

² A large number of quotations proclaiming this property of the Eucharist may be found in Lambert's "Le Régime Sauveur," and in Tesnière's "La Communion, Antidote du Péché."

should not be notably changed, and presently cured, by daily Communion. Were such a soul only to address to God each day this humble, confiding prayer, "I am weak: help me!" that prayer would infallibly be heard. But this soul does more. It brings to Jesus its poor bruised heart, begging Him to weaken the evil tendencies that are ruining it, to put in their place something of His love for purity, and of His strength for practising it. If after a certain course of this beneficent treatment no progress ensued, if the falls were just as numerous, one would have reason to seek the clue to this puzzle and to ask: What could Our Lord have been doing in that soul day after day?¹

But, God be praised, if there be no break in the use of this remedy, its action will be speedily and efficaciously felt, and the soul will soon sing its canticle of deliverance. Examples abound. (Here instances might be quoted.)

3. This is the reason why great *educators* of our time have been promoters of frequent Communion amongst the young. The zeal of Don Bosco is well known. He gathered together, from the streets of large cities, abandoned children destitute of any education. Out of many such he made excellent Christians, good workmen, exemplary fathers of families, and even priests and missionaries. One day an English visitor to his establishment in Turin, astonished at such wonderful reforms, asked Don Bosco what was his secret for transforming such unfavourable material. The holy man answered:

¹ Spiritual directors must remember that there are cases which depend for their relief upon pathology, upon altering some state of living, upon the influence of surroundings. We are speaking above of the normal working of the Eucharist, not of any miraculous power.

"I only know two means of education : the stick and Communion. I have now *given up the stick* and taken to Communion."

He knew well that the rod could and ought to maintain discipline, but that it did not reach souls. He was aware that these were to be reformed, not by the eloquence, tact, or even virtue of the educator, but rather by Our Lord's grace ; it is the priest's one business to bring them into touch with Him.¹

4. Say not, "I don't see that child's need of such frequent Communion." You are not qualified to judge. The Church, with her motherly solicitude, declares that there is a need. Submit your judgment to hers. And then, granting that the need be not urgent for the present, make sure of the future. Do not wait till disasters have occurred. Consider that it is better to preserve a fortune than to rebuild it painfully out of a few scattered fragments. Does not the experience of thousands of children, including your own, tell you that when you used to communicate more frequently your soul was cleaner, that when you fell into sin you had begun by being careless about prayer and Communion ?

5. Christian parents, do not thwart the views of Holy Church. That would be at once an injury to your children . . . an imprudence in respect of their future and of *your own*. . . .

On the contrary, encourage them to the utmost of your power. How glad you will one day be that you did so !

An enlightened love for your children will help you

¹ One might usefully quote the example of Mgr. de Ségur, apostle of frequent Communion among the young, and even in the Paris workshops ; of Père Cros, S.J., "*Enfants à la Sainte Table* ;" and of the missionaries of Madurá (Lambert, "*Le Régime Sauveur*").

to understand these words of Fénelon: "Though a child needs to be thoroughly prepared for first Communion, I think, nevertheless, that once it is prepared, *one could not possibly forearm it with so precious a grace too early*, before innocence becomes exposed to dangerous occasions in which it begins to get tarnished."¹

Reading.—Cros, S.J. "Enfants à la Sainte Table," Lintelo, S.J. "Aux Parents et aux Éducateurs." *La Communion fréquente des enfants*. 16 pp. in-18, 5 cent.

¹ "De l'Éducation des Filles," chap. viii.

WHY MEN SHOULD RECEIVE COMMUNION FREQUENTLY.

ONE phrase sums up the whole aim of impiety: *Man without God* . . . in the schools, hospitals, marriage, funerals, laws, public life. . . . It seeks to secularize man to the core, by setting up an ethical code divorced from all religion.¹

One word sums up the whole of Christianity: *God in man*. Incorporation with Christ by baptism, the maintenance of His life within us by means of the Eucharist, are fundamental doctrines of our profession. To the infuriated assaults of hell the Pope opposes more than ever the Divine plan: God in man, through daily Communion.

How ought Christians to receive such an appeal? Why, if they had a stronger faith, we should behold

¹ Here, although naturally the author has mainly in view Continental "anti-clericalism," which means practical anti-Christianity, yet the principle above stated applies to all countries—England among the rest. The "secular" or godless solution of the educational problem is coming to the front amongst us; and a growing humanitarianism is increasingly substituting the pleasure and supposed earthly progress of man for the Divine Will as the test of morality, particularly in regard to marriage, suicide, etc. In America, divorce and criminal abuse of matrimony are still more rampant, and the plan of giving a painless quietus to hopelessly useless members of society has been openly discussed. All this is in the direction of "man without God."—*T.*

them crowding to our Holy Table in order to obtain that strengthening of the Divine life in their souls which is offered to them! But is this what is happening? Though women have become more eager than before, "the majority of men either do not communicate at all, or do so rarely. Hence arises a moral anæmia; and, among graver consequences, the social problem, which is primarily a *moral* problem. Hence, too, the process of degeneration in the human race, and threatened extinction, unless men return once more to be fed upon the Bread of Life."¹

The notion that frequency of Communion is a feminine practice, a sort of devotional luxury suitable to mere sentimental natures, is a disastrous prejudice, and one most insulting to Our Lord.

Yet there are not two Gospels, nor are there two Eucharists; and what arguments could anyone possibly advance in support of the absurd contention that men have less need of Sacramental graces than women?

What men do not venture to state openly, they think and insinuate. For, in truth, they look upon Communion, not as a vital act necessary to Christians, but as a work of supererogation.

To combat this prejudice, we will set forth the reasons which call men, above others, to the Holy Table. These are deduced:

- A. From their personal religious needs.
- B. From Our Lord's right to social worship.
- C. From their duty of apostolic zeal.

¹ Letter of Mgr. Doutreloux, Bishop of Liège, announcing the Eucharistic Congress of Lourdes, in 1899. (The statistics of the birth-rate in England show the applicability of the Bishop's words beyond the limits of his own country.)

A. Personal Needs.

1. Generally speaking, the passions of a man are more violent; his life is led more commonly away from home, is more unfettered, and also more exposed to the allurements of sinful pleasure. Now, in such circumstances, Communion is a necessary preservative.

2. A man is more liable to be assailed by doubts, to hear the lying of false doctrines and attacks upon the faith. His faith needs to be protected, invigorated, and exercised by Holy Communion (see Conference on this subject, p. 138).

3. The man bears the heavier burden of business, of anxieties for the future, or of absorbing studies and the daily wants of the family.

And would you reckon without God? With Holy Communion there will be two of you to work, to struggle, to suffer. According to the beautiful saying of Colonel Paqueron, "To receive Communion is to assimilate the maximum of energy with the highest intensity of light." Think what must be the value of a life that is thus supernaturally developed.

B. Social Worship.

1. The Curé d'Ars had started in his parish an association of the Rosary for women, and another in honour of the Blessed Sacrament for men. He gave the following reason: "Men should be foremost in paying homage to Jesus Christ in the Eucharist."

2. The Sacred Host which we adore is no mere holy or consecrated thing, but a living Person. Jesus Christ there present is our Saviour, our King, our God. He claims a *social* worship, and men, as being the prime

movers of human society, are bound before all others to pay him public homage.

3. What will not people do, upon occasion, for the Kings of this world? . . . Sumptuous banquets . . . princely retinues . . . ostentatious display of wealth. . . . (Illustrate from current events—Royal visits or weddings, etc.) Such honours are directed towards the authority with which these personages are invested, or towards the nation which they represent, . . . but, after all, they are but men, and a death, tragic or commonplace, sooner or later exposes their nothingness before the eyes of all.

4. All honour, then, to the God of the Eucharist! It is a grand thing to attend Him when He visits His people, and to take part in imposing religious demonstrations; a grander still to come faithfully to mount guard at the foot of His altar as adorers, during the day or at night. But there is a further form of homage, more perfect because complete—one which Our Lord expects from enlightened Christians—that of kneeling publicly at the Communion-rails, not at long intervals, but constantly—even daily, if possible! As long as our worship of the Eucharistic King falls short of this, He has not been treated as the Master, He has cause to complain of our coldness and reserve; the foremost of His rights is not duly acknowledged—the right to take possession of our hearts.

C. Apostleship.

Apostolic influence and the conquest of souls are not as strictly reserved to men as the management of society. Nevertheless, men are indebted to the Eucharist for whatever they are able to accomplish in this direction.

1. *The Eucharist makes them thorough Christians*, and this is a first requisite for being apostles. "The highest service that can be rendered to unbelievers," wrote Louis Veuillot, "is that Christians should really be Christians. If the comparatively small number of those who frequent churches were truly what they ought to be, if they possessed knowledge and love, they would transform the world."

2. *The Eucharist spurs them on to action*. Our Lord imparts to the communicant something of that great passion of His Heart—zeal for the salvation of souls. He shows to him the white harvests which are being destroyed, and invites him to become a labourer. Is it not in the intimacy of Communion that so many heroes of apostolic zeal have heard the Voice which they have followed?

On the other hand, the duty of gratitude felt by the communicant impels him to consider what return he can make to the God Who has so loved him: *Quid retribuam Domino?* And then he recalls the word of the Master: "Whatsoever you shall do to the least of these My little ones, you have done it to Me." And so he seeks to place his children at good schools, to substitute good reading for bad, to console the sorrowing, to promote the triumph of the good cause.

3. By their example, *they attract others to the Holy Table*—and what apostolate can be more fruitful than this? At first people will wonder at seeing them so devout on days when, till now, it has not been customary for large numbers to gather. This will furnish them with an opportunity for explaining their conduct, and for spreading Catholic ideas concerning Communion. By degrees people will begin to admire; some will say: "Those who go to Communion lead better lives, so I will do likewise." Happy they who

shall have done their brethren the signal service of thus leading them to Our Lord!

Conclusion.—Are no *educators* of this kind to be found among you? What self-devotion has not enthusiasm for some great man, or for some cause, inspired! . . . Is Jesus Christ and the interest of souls to be the only cause for which people will refuse to sacrifice themselves? Understand, then, that Jesus asks you for something more than mere worship; He asks for the heart-to-heart intercourse of Holy Communion.

Sonis,¹ that splendid Catholic soldier, though in the midst of camp-life, used to receive Communion daily whenever this was possible. Was he on that account less of a man, or less distinguished in the performance of his duties as a soldier? It is the same with so many constant guests at Our Lord's Table. So, also, will it be with you. And soon this daily Communion, begun solely upon faith, will become a holy necessity to you, and secure to you a happiness of which you will never again wish to be deprived.²

¹ "General de Sonis," Life by Lady Herbert of Lea. London, Art and Book Co.

² It is pleasant to quote here the example of six Belgian gentlemen in high society, who agreed together to receive daily, and to keep each other up to the mark, as an apostolic work. [There is no reason on earth why many sixes of English, or other, gentlemen should not do the like with a view to promoting the "salutary practice" in their parishes. The late well-known actor, Mr. William Farran, sen., who died in 1908, in Italy, used, to the Translator's knowledge, to communicate frequently during the week, even while on tour.]

COMMUNION THE PRESERVER OF FAITH.

1. OUR Lord Jesus Christ called Himself "the Light of the world." Thus He gives Himself to us not as the Life only, but as "the Truth," for our understandings. Perhaps we are too prone to overlook this feature of Communion. As we shall see presently, it has a very special importance for our times. Leo XIII. explains the reason of this, as follows: "Every righteous and devout mind must perceive with grief how fervour in professing the faith and ancient purity of morals, are vanishing from the lives of many. If we seek for the cause, it is to be found chiefly in this fact—that appreciation and use of the Eucharistic Banquet are declining amongst the greater number, and have wholly ceased to exist amongst many."¹

2. Among those who profess the Catholic faith let us do honour to that brave and chosen band which proclaims proudly, like the faithful of olden times, "We are Catholics, and we glory in our faith." These know well that albeit in this exile and life of trial there are shadows enough for lending merit to our faith, there is also enough of light to afford us ample reason for believing. In the truths which the Church proposes to us they find a clear solution of difficulties

¹ Brief of January 10, 1900.

concerning the purpose and use of this present life, and a source of invincible strength and sublimest comfort in the midst of sorrow. There is no gloom, no desolation, to compare with that of a soul that has forfeited its baptismal faith.

Yet, side by side with these brave ones, what do we so often see? Catholics who, while maintaining certain practices of their religion, are disturbed in mind by the blasphemies of the wicked, suffer themselves to be shaken by the fallacies with which they are plied, and, at least in certain moments, ask themselves nervously whether, after all, they feel quite sure of being in the right. Others — possessed perhaps of greater steadiness, and free from doubt—seem almost to view the enemies of their faith with envy, profess respect for their opinions, and demean themselves by deplorable indulgence towards men and writers hostile to the Church. Then, how many there are who feel their faith a trouble, and hide it away from the sight of the scoffing unbeliever, fain to secure forgiveness for it by some sort of compromise and by loudly protesting that *they*, at least, are no bigots! Hazy notions, memories of childhood, the fashion prevailing among their set—is it not to this that the faith of such degenerates practically reduces itself? Instead of being the very breath of their life, their faith more nearly resembles a garment worn upon a feast-day, and laid aside at its close.

And yet it is by the light of the Gospel that we shall be judged: “He that believeth not shall be condemned.”¹

3. The cause of this pitiful weakness of faith has often been pointed out by the Popes of our day, and notably by Pius X. It is not the progress of science,

¹ Mark xvi. 16.

but *ignorance of religion*. What do these half-hearted Catholics know? The most essential truths are either misunderstood or wholly ignored, such as the nobility of a Christian life and of union with Christ through sanctifying grace, and the duties which the latter involves, the exercise of supernatural virtue—which is impossible without grace—the sources from which it derives support—prayer and the Sacraments.

From this ignorance there springs a kind of practical naturalism—a faith incapable of action, self-defence, or propagation. Our Lord requires from us both intelligence and heart—faith as well as good works.

4. From without, *graver perils than ever* threaten nowadays the faith of Christians. The circles in which they move swarm with people who are strangers to their faith; the influence of frivolous literature—either dangerous or merely secularist—is not counteracted by reading books of Catholic instruction, or, at least, of an edifying nature; the daring of the Church's enemies is "overturning all dogma with unprecedented fury, and is making a determined effort to abolish all relations between man and his God."¹ Then there is that treacherous error styled by the Pope "a compendium of all heresies"—Modernism—which labours by cunning devices to corrupt the faith "even in its inmost fibres."

We are menaced with this danger, and it behoves us to be on our guard. A man is always of his own times. Brethren, one cannot entirely rid oneself of the atmosphere one breathes. Here is what an eminent prince of the Church has written: "We draw a distinction between Modernist doctrines and the breath which animates them. You have been fortu-

¹ First Encyclical of Pius X.

nate enough to keep free from the doctrines themselves . . . but I fear much more, for you, the contamination of the Modernist spirit. . . . The atmosphere is impregnated with this spirit—viz., the individual conscience usurping the place of the guidance of authority.”¹

5. What **remedy** is to be applied to such grave dangers? First and foremost a *deeper study of our holy religion*. That religion is no mere collection of truths claiming our mental acceptance, but a way of life. We must not fancy that everything worth knowing is included in what we have retained of our catechetical instruction during childhood.²

People only know what they have learnt, only think about what they know, and only love what they firmly grasp. It is so with profane sciences—history, physical science, literature, etc. . . . Why should it be otherwise with religion?

Yet, though the Catechism, apologetics, the study of the Gospels, claim our attention at every period of life, such studies are *insufficient* to protect our faith completely. Faith is a gift of God, as well as a virtue. It depends not only upon our intellect, but also upon

¹ Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Mercier (Malines) on Modernism. Lent, 1908.

² Is it not true that many Catholics of twenty, thirty, or forty years of age would, if questioned on the point, be forced to confess that, since the day of their first Communion, they have learnt nothing more of their religion—perhaps even that they have unlearned it? I easily understand why, in these days of confusion, irreligion should make conquests, and I deplore the fact. But what is more difficult to explain is how any man who is intelligent, believing, and alive to the benefit God has bestowed in vouchsafing to him the privilege of the true faith, can be content with ignorance as to what he believes, and why he believes it, and what are the duties towards God and his neighbour to which he is pledged by the solemn promises of his baptism” (Cardinal Mercier, *ibid.*).

our will and upon grace. Study, it is true, prepares the way for grace, but it does not furnish the supernatural aids for exercising humility, chastity, and charity. "Apologetics, no doubt, have their office in the Church. One must make a defence when attacked. When a man is ill, one must, of course, call in the physician. But hygiene is more precious than medicine."¹ Now, this hygiene lies principally in a frequent reception of Holy Communion, the functions of which are to preserve and quicken our faith, and to exercise it in the most beneficial manner.

6. Communion preserves Faith.—The Gospel teaches us that evil works give birth to unbelief. Theology adds that the faith received in baptism would never be taken from us if we did not deserve to lose it. Loss of faith is always accompanied by some form of habitual mortal sin as its cause.

Experience speaks the same language as doctrine. Lamennais wrote: "When a man ceases to believe, it is because he has yielded to some consideration of pride or of sensuality." François Coppée, the author of "La Souffrance," humbly acknowledged the same thing: "The crisis of youth and the shame involved in confessing certain faults were the causes of my abandoning pious practices. Numbers of men, if they were honest, would agree in acknowledging that what first estranged them from religion was the severe restraint it imposes upon all as regards the use of the senses. . . ."

It is of first importance "to do away with the interested motives for unbelief" (Cardinal Mercier). This is precisely the first effect of Communion—viz., to

¹ Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Mercier (Malines) on Modernism. Lent, 1908.

preserve us from mortal sin, of whatever kind, to maintain the soul in contact with God, and in readiness to keep His Commandments. This is the first reason why a Christian who communicates frequently commonly protects his faith more effectually than one who receives but seldom.

7. Communion quickens Faith.—In its character of food, it is designed to revive in the soul all its latent supernatural energies—for instance, those due to the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, or Matrimony. An organ of the body which is not quickened by the constant accession of healthy blood becomes sluggish, functions badly, and becomes paralyzed. Now, the gifts of faith and of hope—called by theologians “infused virtues”—need, just as charity does, those repeated supplies of vital force which are conveyed to them by Holy Communion. St. Thomas Aquinas says that “the Eucharist is the end and consummation of the other Sacraments”—which means that it perfects them all, giving to the virtue proper to each of them a sort of complete development and fullness of action.¹

8. Communion exercises Faith.—It is exercise that strengthens a virtue. Now, Communion brings about an actual use of faith under the most favourable conditions.

(a) It calls for the most thorough submission of the intellect to the doctrine of the Real Presence, which is so opposed to the testimony of our senses, and is the great compendium of revealed truths.

(b) It secures to us, in close intimacy with Jesus, Who there becomes our Food, the most favourable opportunity for the expansion of faith. In what other circumstances could we repeat with more

¹ See Tesnière, “Somme,” t. i., 3rd confer.

recollection, confidence, and love, "My Lord and my God"?¹

9. Let us now try to master *the lessons of the first centuries*. The faith of the Christians, scattered throughout a pagan world, was not merely scoffed at, despised, smothered in blood, but was also disputed and attacked by cultivated minds. It was by the teaching of doctrine, and the strengthening of the Christian character with the Bread of Life, that the Fathers preserved the faithful. The "Apologies" were primarily addressed to the pagans and to magistrates. Referring to these writings, a distinguished critic, Mgr. Duchesne, makes the following reflection: "Possibly these writings may here and there have modified the views entertained by men of letters. But their influence must not be overrated. To go to the root of the matter, that which enabled the Church to live under persecuting laws, and triumph over indifference, contempt, and calumny, was not reasonings or discourses. It was the innate strength, manifesting itself and shining forth in virtue, charity, and in the burning faith of the Christians in that heroic age. It was this which led men to Jesus Christ; it was by this that the apologists themselves had been captured; and it was by the same means that Romans were brought to adore a crucified Jew, and dogmas, like that of the Resurrection, succeeded in gaining entrance into Greek heads."²

And that thing was *life*, and it is Communion that imparts it, nor has it lost any of its efficacy.

¹ It may be noticed, by the way, that in a grant dated June 12, 1907, the Holy See offers an indulgence of seven years and seven quarantines to anyone who, looking at the Sacred Host, recites the above words of the Apostle St. Thomas with faith and devotion.—*T.*

² "Ancienne Histoire de l'Église," t. i., p. 214. Paris, 1907.

10. Numberless **contemporary witnesses** may be brought to confirm this influence upon faith exerted by the Eucharist.

Père Grâtry, during his youth, passed through a crisis of faith. Communion each Sunday, reading and meditation on the Holy Scriptures, more especially on the Gospels, were the means by which he was enabled to issue victoriously from the trial.

Ozanam says in one of his letters: "Though the whole world should have abjured the name of Christ, there is in Communion, and in the tears which it evokes, an unspeakable sweetness, a strength of conviction which would suffice to make me cling to the Cross and defy the unbelief of the whole earth."

Ozanam here refers to one of the fruits of the Eucharist, namely, sensible devotion, which is not rare with upright and generous souls. "There are souls," writes M. Georges Goyau, "for whom Eucharistic experience becomes the most imposing of controversial arguments."¹

¹ "Revue Pratique d'Apologétique," 1907, t. i., p. 319. Presumably M. Goyau means—as Ozanam apparently does—an imposing argument for the soul in controversy *with itself*, and not in controversy with unbelievers. Doubtless, a strong and lively faith in the Blessed Eucharist may become an invincible testimony *to itself* within the soul, and, in its superabundance, may overflow into the emotional part of the soul. But the mere experience of strong emotion, springing from a deep subjective conviction that Our Lord is sacramentally there, can be no controversial proof *to others* of the objective reality of His Sacramental Presence, any more than the *lack* of such vivid experiences proves His absence. Thus, an Anglican may experience in Communion very much what a Catholic does—nay, sometimes even more, perhaps. But in so far as such Eucharistic experiences may come from God, they are but the fitting rewards for the earnestness and spiritual effort—the *opus operantis*—of a soul in good faith, that is intimately—though mistakenly—persuaded that Our Lord is there. It is true that À Kempis, writing of Catholic believers, says: "Oh, truly the ardent faith of these persons is a *demonstrative existing argument* of Thy Sacred Presence" ("Imitation of

11. **Practical Conclusions**—A. *For Ourselves*.—Let us bear in mind the truth that faith is more lively in a soul according as it partakes oftener and more fruitfully of the Eucharist. A “lively” faith means a faith which receives an actual influx of life, and this life consists in union with God and the light of the Holy Spirit. Communion quickens that union, banishes conduct injurious to it, while at the same time it makes us exercise faith as a virtue. It is in the ranks of constant communicants that you find souls full of faith. When Jesus is present grace abounds—the grace of truth as well as of life.

No other means inclines us so powerfully to *live* our faith. According to Gospel teaching, the actual doing of good already perceived disposes us for the reception of fresh inspirations.

B. *For our Children*.—It is not enough to improve their minds with religious knowledge; we must fill their souls with grace. Otherwise that knowledge will remain crude and ineffective; it will not be relished, for it is the Holy Ghost Who imparts this relish and true wisdom—*recta sapere*.¹

Sometimes we lament over the indifference of the young. But have they had given to them betimes, and in sufficient quantity, the antidote to all decay, and the sustenance of all courage—the Eucharist? Here is what an educator writes: “If the virtues of children are not consolidated early by Communion,

Christ,” iv. 14, 20). Here, however, the argument does not rest upon *individual* Eucharistic experiences, but upon the *united*, fervent belief of innumerable Catholics in all times and places—the supernatural *communis sensus fidelium*, analogous to the natural *communis sensus generis humani* of philosophy, and closely allied to the corporate infallibility in *credendo* of Christ’s Church.—T.

¹ *Sapere*, i.e., to know, and also to taste or relish.

one page of a bad book, one vile caricature, the first gibe of an evil companion at school, in the drawing-room, the workshop, or the street, will bring to the ground the whole structure of their training, and they will find it a relief to break with a faith that checks them and with virtues that are not pleasant. The feeder of all virtues—the Eucharist—nourishes faith first and foremost; it was Communion which gave to the early Church its legions of child-martyrs.”¹

N.B.—In this instruction, or in some other, one might usefully review the grounds of our faith in the doctrine of the Eucharist itself. This matter is excellently summarized in the first chapter of “*Enfants à la Sainte Table*.” One might improve the point by the story of some miracle. See “*Les Miracles Historiques du Très Saint Sacrement*,” by Père Couet (350 pages, 12mo.).

Reading.—Tesnière, “*Somme Eucharistique*,” Conferences 22 and 23. “*La Communion, aliment de la foi*.”

¹ Cros, S.J., “*Notre Dame de Lourdes*,” p. 365.

MARY AND HOLY COMMUNION.

OUR LADY OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT.

N.B.—This subject would be specially suitable for a feast of Our Lady, for a Guild of Our Lady, for the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes (February 11), etc.

GOD wills that the more we study the greatness of Mary, the more clearly we perceive her close connection with all the mysteries of our redemption. This more perfect realization of very ancient truths finds its expression in some new title, as, for instance, that of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Another example of this is the invocation of "Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament," which Pius X. has twice sanctioned and enriched with indulgences. This title was given to Mary by the Venerable Père Eymard, founder of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament. Desirous of paying his debt of gratitude to Mary, and of obtaining, through her, the spread of the devotion that was so dear to him, he pledged his spiritual sons to invoke her in the words: "Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament, mother and model of adorers, pray for us who have recourse to thee."

The chief manifestation of Mary in our day has had for its scene the grotto of Lourdes. Attention has been called already, more than once, to the close connection that exists between the *cultus* of the Immaculate Virgin and that of the Eucharist.

It will now be shown how the title of "Our Lady of the Most Holy Sacrament"—

- (I.) Is justified in itself;
- (II.) Receives confirmation from the events at Lourdes.

I. Reasons for the Title.

1. *Mary is the Mother of Jesus.*—We believe that the Body of Our Lord, truly present in the Eucharist, is the same that was formed from the most pure blood of the Virgin Mary, and was nourished from her substance.

Ave verum corpus natum de Maria Virgine! This is why the liturgy for Corpus Christi borrows from that of the Nativity of Our Saviour both the Preface, in which the Incarnation of the Word is commemorated, and the words of praise with which all the hymns close: *Jesu, tibi sit gloria, Qui natus es de Virgine!*

In saying "Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament," we pay honour to that intimate union which subsists between Jesus and Mary. It is with the flesh given Him by Mary that Jesus has saved us, and it is with the same flesh that He continues to feed and save the world. "The flesh of Jesus," says St. Augustine, "is the flesh of Mary, and Our Saviour gives us this flesh of Mary as the food of our salvation."

2. *The Eucharistic Life of Mary.*—It is most fitting that we should venerate all the mysteries of the life of the Mother of God. Contemplative souls ponder over the lessons of her retired life at Nazareth; desolate hearts pay honour to her dolours, and seek through them the influences of grace. But Mary lived for more than ten years after the ascension of her Divine Son. How was her soul mainly occupied

during that period? What special grace lies hid in this important period of her life?

The answer cannot be doubtful: she lived upon the Eucharist and by the Eucharist; for, as the Holy Spirit testifies, this was the distinctive feature of the primitive Church: "They were persevering . . . in the communication of the breaking of bread."¹ Mary, especially, persevered in union with that daily offering of Sacrifice, and that daily participation in the Body of Christ. Who could describe the fervour of her acts of adoration in the presence of that fragment of consecrated bread in which she found her Son again, present under a new form, and, together with His presence, the joy of those days in Bethlehem and Nazareth! Who can tell the transports of her love after being nourished with the Eucharist!

When saying "Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament," we hail her as the perfect model for fulfilling our duties towards the Eucharist, and we ask her to obtain for us the grace to perform them less imperfectly. We offer to Jesus the treasures of love and of worship which His Mother has acquired for us, and we pray to her that we may obtain a fuller share in these her sentiments.

3. *Her Office as Mediatrix.* — Mary has been appointed by God the universal dispenser of grace. In that capacity she is entrusted with the disposal of the Eucharist, the most abundant source of all graces, the most efficacious means of salvation. In her love for souls she devotes herself to making them know and love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and bringing them to draw more copiously from the fountain of living water.

Mary cannot bring about the sanctification of our

¹ Acts ii. 42.

souls except conformably to the laws established by her Son. Now, Jesus proclaims this law : "He who eats of My flesh shall have life in him : he who eats not of My flesh shall not have life in him." She sees that if faith and Christian conduct languish in many, and if many, alas ! are dead to the life of grace, this is due to their having failed to take, in due time and quantity, the Bread of Life, the antidote to grievous sin and the remedy for all weaknesses. Like the widow of Naim, tender and afflicted mother as she is, Mary mourns for her sons that are dead in sin. She calls for their resuscitation through the Sacrament of Penance : " You must pray for sinners." And then, the life that has been regained needs to be supported and expanded ; this can only be done by means of Communion. And that is why she urges them : " Come and eat the bread which I have prepared for you " (*cf.* Prov. ix. 5).

II. Lourdes and the Eucharist.

A. *Facts.* — When Mary journeyed through the mountains of Judæa to visit her cousin Elizabeth, it was the "Immaculate Conception" whom travellers passed upon their way. Jesus was not visible, yet He was there. Mary bore Him, and was going to bestow Him through the grace which was about to purify John the Baptist and sanctify Elizabeth.

So, too, when Mary appears at Lourdes, Jesus is with her, but is not seen in her arms. And yet it is He Whom she comes to give to us for the cleansing of sinners and the sanctification of the just.

We must remember that, in that privileged spot, Mary rules as a Queen. She presides over everything. Yet one sees—as Leo XIII. wrote—"the devotion of the faithful towards the most august Sacrament

taking wonderful developments, and revealing itself in solemn processions and in the marvellous frequency of Communion.”¹ Those magnificent processions seem to have become the climax of the pilgrimages. Jesus, hidden in the Sacred Host, is carried in triumph; He blesses the sick laid out at His feet in hundreds; appeals inspired by faith and confidence resound about Him as in the days of His mortal life: “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on us”; “Lord, that I may see, walk, hear”; “Say but the word, and I shall be healed.” And these entreaties are mingled with invocations to Mary: “Health of the sick, pray for us; Comforter of the afflicted—Our Lady of Lourdes—pray for us.”²

And the fortunate witness of this sight asks himself: “Where are we? Is this a pilgrimage of Our Lady or of the Blessed Sacrament?” Then he remembers that the Son is never to be separated from the Mother, that they are always linked together, and that it is Mary’s will to lead these immense crowds to her Jesus in the Eucharist.

My brethren, let us bear in mind that the apparition of Mary at Lourdes had only one privileged child for its witness, that it only lasted during a few visits, and is to those who pray on that hallowed spot no more than a glorious and soul-stirring memory. But with the Blessed Sacrament it is different. That is no mere souvenir of Jesus Christ; it is His very Self, ever living and ever present. It is no mere holy thing, like the oil of Extreme Unction, or the relics of our Saints, but the adorable Person of Our Saviour, Our King, and Our God. *Tantum ergo Sacramentum, veneremur cernui!*

¹ Brief on occasion of the Eucharistic Congress at Lourdes, 1899.

For a most interesting article on Eucharistic cures at Lourdes see *English Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, December, 1908. *Messenger Office*, Wimbledon.—T.

B. *A Word.*—Mary is not satisfied with effacing herself in the presence of her Son; she would make it impossible for us to mistake her intentions: “Go and tell the priests to build a church on this spot.” That was the message which she entrusted to Bernadette.

The grotto is her own special throne. She might have contented herself with scattering her favours thence. But, no; the Church is the throne of Jesus, and therefore she prepares the way for it.

Go to the chapel; it is a holier place than the grotto. It is the goal towards which everything must be directed; it is the centre of our religion, the life of our souls. Catholic art has given to monstrances the shape of a cathedral, of which the Sacred Host forms the centre, or of a sun, of which It is the disc, to remind us that it is from thence that the whole life of the Church radiates.

Go to the chapel, for there is kept the Bread of Life. “Mary thrice repeats to Bernadette the cry of Jonas to the Ninivites: ‘Penance! Penance! Penance!’ and bids her tell the priests to build in that place a church to which she wills that the faithful should flock in procession. And as there is no church without its tabernacle, nor tabernacle without the Eucharist, it is to Holy Communion, the true Bread of Life, that Mary invites sinful humanity for its healing. But a mother understands her children, and Mary knows that, in order to bring them to repentance and lead them from the grotto to the Eucharist, she must first attract and win them over by her favours. This is the triumph of Jesus through Mary—the glorification of Mary through Jesus.”¹

¹ From the discourse of Mgr. Doutreloux, Bishop of Liège, at the Eucharistic Congress, Lourdes, 1899.

The tabernacle, to use the beautiful expression of the Curé d'Ars, is the store-cupboard of the good Christian. Jesus abides there principally in order to be received into our hearts. By this means He carries on His work in our souls. The other Sacraments, as St. Thomas shows, were instituted for the sake of the Eucharist. The latter perfects them all, and makes the power proper to them more active in us.

Go to the chapel, for there the true teaching of the Church, the words of the Pope and the Word of God, are once more spoken. Mary, in telling Bernadette her name, reverently confirmed the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception made by Pius IX. She would also wish to ratify the watchword given by Pius X.: "Come, all of you, to the Holy Table." Blessed, Mary would say with Jesus, are they who hear the Word of God, and keep it!

Conclusion.—Not at Lourdes alone is the Eucharistic Table prepared, but in all our churches and chapels.

It is an act of devotion to Mary that we should sing her praises, deck out her altars with flowers and lights; that we should offer her our acts of piety and virtue. But it is also an act of devotion towards her that we should receive Communion frequently and piously. This is to respond to her dearest wish, born of her love for Jesus, and of her love for us. Sons and daughters of Mary, hearken to your Mother's voice!

May our Mother in heaven obtain for us an ever-growing knowledge and love of Holy Communion.

Reading.—Cros, S.J., "Notre Dame de Lourdes." Part II.; "Mois de Notre Dame du T. S. Sacrement." by Père Eymard.

HOLY COMMUNION AND THE SAINTS.

THE sacred liturgy calls Communion "the source of all holiness."¹ It would be easy to show that this was the source whence the Saints derived strength to renounce themselves, to rise to perfection in virtues, and to advance unceasingly in the love of God and of men. In the heart of each chosen soul Jesus makes Himself "the Light of confessors, the Teacher of evangelists, the Strength of martyrs, the Purity of virgins, the Example of virtues," and, in a word, "our Way and our Life."² St. Thomas Aquinas, too, adopting the memorable words of St. Denis, the Areopagite, writes: "No one can rise to any height of perfection except by the operation of the Most Divine Eucharist."³

It is not our present purpose to establish this truth by proofs, but rather to show how the voices of the Saints join themselves to the voice of the Church in saying to us: Receive Communion often. In their counsels we hear a fresh echo of the purest ecclesiastical tradition.

We will notice three kinds of manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Saints:

¹ "Secret of the Mass of St. Ignatius," July 31. Roman Missal.

² Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus.

³ "Non contingit aliquem perfici perfectione hierarchica nisi per divinissimam Eucharistiam," III. pars., q. 65, art. 3.

1. The *words* which Our Lord spoke to them.
2. The miraculous occurrences with which they were favoured.
3. Their heavenly yearnings after Holy Communion.

We give some facts by way of illustration, followed by the reflections which they suggest and which explain their significance.

I.

WORDS OF OUR LORD TO HIS FRIENDS.

A. *Facts*.—1. **St. Gertrude**.—"Amongst those who ruled the monastery, there was one whose notions concerning Communion were animated more by zeal for justice than by a spirit of mercy. . . . By degrees he succeeded in making the nuns more timid. Gertrude grieved over this, and while praying one day for the severe director, she asked Jesus, 'Lord, what dost Thou think of his conduct?' The answer of Our Lord was as follows: 'My delight is to be with the children of men. In order to give vent to My love, I have instituted this Sacrament. I have bound Myself to remain therein till the end of the world, and it is My wish that it should be frequently received. Hence, whoever, either by public instruction or private direction, deters from Holy Communion a soul *that is not in mortal sin*, the same hinders and interrupts the pleasures of My heart.'" Were some young Prince to take great delight in conversing and playing with children of poor and lowly condition, would he not be greatly vexed if his tutor came to scold him severely, and to drive away the young peasants on the pretext that it ill became a young Prince's dignity to play such games with such companions?"¹

¹ Cros, S.J., "Le Cœur de Sainte Gertrude," p. 128.

2. **Blessed Margaret Mary.**—Our Lord told her one day: “I take such pleasure in being desired, in the Sacrament of My love, that as often as a heart forms that desire, so often do I look lovingly upon it, in order to draw it towards Me.”¹ “As I was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, I beheld someone enveloped with fire. The pitiable state which he showed me was his in purgatory, made me shed many tears. He told me that he was a Benedictine monk who had once heard my confession, *and had commanded me to go to Holy Communion, in return for which God had allowed him to apply to me, in order that I might give him relief in his sufferings!*”²

Like incidents are recorded in the lives of St. Margaret of Cortona and of St. Catherine of Siena. To the former Our Lord revealed that He would give a more abundant reward to her confessor, because he had advised her to communicate frequently, and He inspired the confessor of the latter, Blessed Raymond of Capua, to permit her to receive as often as she desired to do so.

3. We may also quote the words of a servant of God, our contemporary, Sister Mary of the Divine Heart.³ It was to the fulfilment by this humble religious, at Our Lord's desire, of a mission to Pope Leo XIII., that the world owed its consecration to the Heart of Jesus, June 11, 1899. Worn out by sufferings and illnesses, she obtained, through the Cardinal Archbishop of Oporto, the privilege of communicating daily after breaking her fast. Hereupon she declared: “Our Lord

¹ “Vie et Œuvres,” ii., p. 262.

² *Ibid.*, ii., p. 472.

³ Maria Droste zu Vischering, of the Good Shepherd Institute, who died in 1899, aged thirty-six years, in repute for sanctity. See “Life” (Burns and Oates, London).

told me that in recompense for thus permitting me to continue my Communions, He would grant special blessings to His Eminence and to your Reverence.

“A few months ago (during my illness) Our Lord told me how much it displeased Him that in certain places there was still so much rigidity regarding frequent Communion. He told me to do my utmost to change this, promising that He would grant me an increase of eternal glory every time I even indirectly procured His entrance into a heart.”

B. *Their Significance.*—Communications of this kind are clearly not invested with the infallible character of the revealed Word of God. It is possible for their recipients unconsciously to mingle with them their own personal ideas. For all that, they deserve our closest attention.

For, if these holy souls have accurately set down what Our Lord taught them, then we have an authentic expression of His most ardent desire to give Himself as food to our souls. If, on the other hand, they have given us merely their own thoughts, in this case we must allow that we have in the Saints reliable guides, specialists in the way of perfection, teachers gifted with a higher knowledge and a greater experience of Divine things.

Besides, when the Saints speak on their own account, we find in their words the same appreciation of frequent Communion, the same fervent exhortations to us to receive the Divine gift. Here are a few samples:

“The soul gains more benefit from a single Communion than from a whole week of fasting upon bread and water” (St. Vincent Ferrer).

“What should men desire except to receive Jesus Christ as often as they can?” (St. Alphonsus Liguori).

“Very frequent Communion is the thing that will best enable sinners to extricate themselves both from their sins and from error” (St. Francis Xavier).

II.

MIRACULOUS INCIDENTS.

A. *The Facts*.—1. **Blessed Imelda Lambertini**, a child of eleven years, and full of love for the adorable Eucharist, was consumed by an ardent wish to be united to it. . . . Once, while her companions—older than herself—were approaching the Holy Table, a Host that seemed to have come down from above placed itself over her head, and remained miraculously suspended in mid-air, until the priest, bearing a paten in his hand, approached Imelda, and then the Host deposited itself upon the paten. Struck by this prodigy, the priest of God took the particle into his hand and gave Imelda Holy Communion with it. But she, unable, as it seemed, to contain such bliss within her mortal body, sank down in a swoon, and shortly died of happiness and love.¹

2. **St. Lutgarde**.—In the life of this Saint it is recorded that the abbess of her monastery, considering that Lutgarde communicated too frequently, reduced the number of her Communions, and that she was seized with a sudden illness, which prevented her too from communicating. The sickness did not leave her until she had acknowledged her error and given Lutgarde leave to continue her Communions as before.

3. **St. Stanislaus Kostka** twice received Com-

¹ French Life of Blessed Imelda Lambertini, patroness of Children First Communicants, Bruxelles, 205, Chaussée de Wavre.

munion from the hands of angels. The first occasion was while he was pursuing his studies at Vienna. By the arrangement of his elder brother, Paul, he was lodged in the house of a Lutheran of that city. Falling dangerously ill, he begged to have the Sacraments administered to him; but the heretic, being a bigot, would not hear of a Catholic priest entering his house. Stanislaus thereupon prayed to St. Barbara to obtain for him the grace of receiving Holy Viaticum. His prayer was heard. One night, when the violence of his illness prevented sleep, he saw by his bedside a vision of St. Barbara followed by two angels, one of whom carried the Blessed Sacrament. At this sight Stanislaus threw himself upon his knees on the bed, warned his tutor, who was nursing him, to adore Our Lord, and then recited aloud the usual prayer which precedes Holy Communion, and after receiving the Sacred Host, remained for a long time in silence and recollection, showing plainly that some extraordinary occurrence was taking place within him.

Another time, while journeying on foot as a beggar to Rome, in order to seek the favour of admission into the Society of Jesus, he had entered what he took to be a Catholic church, in the hope of obtaining Communion. He soon discovered that he had fallen among heretics. The tabernacle was empty. Then Stanislaus poured forth his tears, and once again two angels brought him the Bread of Life for which he longed.

4. One has read of the Sacred Host disappearing from the priest's hands, or issuing from the ciborium, and placing itself upon the lips of those whom Our Lord wished to reward for their holy desires. At other times Our Lord has sent His blessed spirits, or

souls of the blessed, in human form for the purpose of administering this Divine Food to His Saints, either to appease their great hunger for the Heavenly Bread or to overcome their objections, prompted by humility.

St. Bonaventure, while attending Mass one day, was silently bewailing his lot, deeming himself unworthy to draw near the Holy Table. At the moment of the Communion, the Sacred Host came of Itself on to his lips. Thirty years later, during his last sickness, when unable to receive Viaticum, he humbly asked to be allowed to adore his Saviour, hidden beneath the Sacramental veils, for the last time. And during this final act of adoration the Host was seen to leave the priest's hands, lay Itself upon the dying Saint's breast, and then disappear.

Similar favours were granted to St. Juliana Falconieri and to St. Catherine of Siena.

5. Premature Intelligence of the Eucharist in Young Children.—Besides external miracles, spiritual wonders are occasionally to be met with in tiny children. Our Lord sometimes gives to these innocents an intelligence of, and a love for, the Most Holy Eucharist far beyond their years.

More than a hundred years ago a younger child than Blessed Imelda ardently desired to receive Communion as soon as she understood that Our Lord was really present in the Blessed Sacrament. She was but *four* years old. To every priest she met this infant presented her request for Holy Communion, and one day she was fortunate enough to find a priest who was ready to grant it, and she was filled with joy upon receiving Our Blessed Lord. Her aunt, at the child's request, took her to see St. Alphonsus Liguori, and the saintly Bishop conversed with the child, instructing her how she was to love Our Lord, and live for Him

alone, and pray for sinners. That must have been a wonderful scene—the aged Bishop, then nearly ninety, solemnly conversing about Divine things with a mite of four.

To come to recent years.¹ Nellie —, a little girl, aged four and a half years, accompanied by her sister, entered the Industrial School at the Good Shepherd Convent, Cork, Ireland. In May, 1907, illness obliged her removal to the hospital. Later, she was able for a time to join the convent school, where she became a great favourite with all her playmates, in spite of violent screaming fits, attributed at first to temper, but afterwards seen to be caused by some great physical suffering. This resulted in her having to be sent to the Sacred Heart Infirmary, in the convent grounds, used for cases needing isolation, where she was devotedly cared for by a nurse. In the end she had to be taken into the nurse's own room to receive the special attention necessary for prolonging her life.

One "First Friday" the nurse took Nellie to the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and explained to the child, who sat beside her, Who was there present—that "Holy God" had come all the way from heaven to prove His love for us. From this moment the child's love for Our Lord in His Most Holy Sacrament was marvellous. She seemed to realize that great mystery of love as few do, and on Exposition days, though no one should have told her that Our Lord was exposed on the altar, she would always beseech the nurse to take her down to "Holy God," and there she would remain quite content, with her eyes fixed upon the monstrance, and her little hands joined in prayer.

¹ This account is taken from *Rome* for May 9, 1908 (T.'s addition).

Having heard of this little prodigy, the Bishop telephoned one morning to say that he would be with us that day and administer Confirmation to her. Being now too weak to sit or kneel, she was brought to the church by her nurse, and in her arms received the Holy Ghost. After this, Nellie's longing for Our Lord grew daily, and one evening she begged the Rev. Mother to bring up "Holy God" in the morning. Our Mother promised to come to see her after Mass, and at eight o'clock Nellie woke the nurse, and insisted on her getting all things ready—for "you know," she said, "Holy God is coming." The Jesuit Father who was conducting the Community retreat spoke to Nellie, and finding that the child perfectly understood what Holy Communion was, thought that there was nothing to prevent her from making her first Communion. The following little incident will prove how well the child understood what she was doing. Our Mother had the little one on her knee one day, and she said to her: "You will soon be one of God's little angels, you have never committed a sin." "Oh yes, Mother, I have," she replied; "I told a lie once." Our Bishop, on being asked, willingly gave permission, and on December 6, the first Friday, Nellie was brought to the church and received Our Lord for the first time. Her happiness was now complete, and from that time, almost to the end, she received Communion nearly every day. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception she was made a child of Mary, and two days later she received Extreme Unction. At Christmas she was again brought down to receive Holy Communion at the midnight Mass, and to see the tiny hands joined in prayer, the eyes fixed on the tabernacle, and the pale little lips moving in prayer, was a sight one could never forget. One

felt that the soul of this little child was very dear and close to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. . . .

Nellie drew her Rosary ticket for February, and we found that her Patroness for the month was our Blessed Lady in her Purification. That feast was to be the day of her death. Strange to say, she always said she would die on a Sunday—"Holy God's" day—and so it happened. For several days she suffered agonies, but she always said: "This is nothing to what Our Lord suffered on the cross for me." It was pitiful to see her heroic efforts to bear her great pains. Her way of making an act of contrition was most touching. During the last week of her illness she cried bitterly several times because she could not receive Holy Communion. Once when the nurse feared to leave her, Nellie insisted on her going down to Mass, saying: "Go down, and when you have received Holy God, come up and kiss me." At about 2 p.m. on Sunday little Nellie was suffering terribly, but suddenly her eyes opened and remained fixed; her little face shone, and her lips moved as if speaking to someone. She remained thus for nearly an hour, when her agony recommenced, and it continued until about a quarter to four, when pain ceased, and little Nellie went at last to "Holy God." One could not grieve, for one felt that she was happy with the angels at the feet of the Good Shepherd; for verily of such is the kingdom of heaven. Little Nellie is said to have obtained many favours for souls since she went to "Holy God."

5. **The Eucharist—the Sole Food of Several Saints.**—The following instances may be quoted: Blessed Nicholas of Flue, a native of Switzerland, aged nineteen; St. Catherine of Siena; St. Angela of Foligno, aged twelve; St. Lidwina, aged twenty-

eight. These marvellous cases at first excited suspicion, but their reality was established by all the means that God has placed within the reach of man.

B. *Interpretation.*—All these instances prove clearly the ardent desire Our Saviour has to give Himself as nourishment for our souls, and the pleasure He takes in rewarding the longing of His servants. You may say, perhaps, that these are Saints, and that no conclusions can be drawn from what happened in their case. The answer to this is that, on the contrary, we may draw conclusions of great importance, because, in the case of Saints, we only behold in stronger relief that which forms the very foundation of all Christian life. Though these heroic souls may perhaps hold a monopoly of miraculous manifestations, they certainly do not hold that of Communion itself. The latter is for all souls alike, the necessary condition for supernatural life, and for all its developments. “He that eateth my flesh . . . hath life: he that eateth it not, shall not have life in him.”

These facts show precisely that nothing can fill the place of Communion in the economy of the spiritual life. When Our Lord wishes to pour His grace in torrents upon a soul and to make it more beautiful and perfect, He makes use of the means which He Himself has appointed. He is even willing to work a miracle, not by way of compensating for the lack of Communion, but in order to secure the Sacrament to a soul that is dear to Him. Our Lord makes use of a miracle in protest, as it were, against the imposition of that password which unenlightened or slothful servants of His would sometimes demand of Him before allowing Him access to the souls of His faithful.

And if the Eucharist fulfils this function in the work of perfecting souls, still more is it the appointed means for sustaining them. From this point of view one may say to you, brethren: *The further you are from holiness, the greater is your need of Holy Communion.*

III.

HUNGER FOR THE EUCHARIST.

The fervent longings of the Saints for the Eucharist are well known, and they have inspired the devout author of the "Imitation of Christ" with one of his most beautiful chapters (iv. 17). Here the preacher should quote the example of those whose interior life is better known. The miracles just mentioned supply additional proof.

Blessed Dorothy.—Died in 1390. Was first married, then retired to the cloister upon becoming a widow, and used to receive Communion every morning. According to the custom of the age, she had communicated but seldom in her youth—at first twice, then four times, and then seven times a year. As a widow, she began to receive the Eucharist every Sunday, then soon several times a week, and at length every day. But her desire became the stronger according as she was more frequently united to the object of her love. She was fain to forestall the already early hour of her Communion, and acknowledged that she would have liked to receive Our Lord more than once a day. All those about her were astonished, and even scandalized, at this kind of spiritual gluttony. To their remonstrances she gave this answer, which her Divine Master had dictated: "It is Christ Who works in me whatever

good is to be found there. How, then, can I help desiring more and more to be united to Him?"

St. John Berchmans.¹—"O Jesus Christ," he would exclaim, "what other sweetness, what other joy is there for me on earth, except to unite myself to Thee in Holy Communion?" He craved for that Bread which makes man Divine by incorporating him with God, and he looked forward with ardent longing to the days when it would be given to him. "I experience a fresh access of strength," he said, "on receiving this nourishing Bread, and as the week draws to a close my soul begins to feel a faintness." Sometimes he would ask for the favour of an extra Communion. And if a feast-day fell upon a Sunday, "Alas," he would say, "one banquet the less for this week!"²

Blessed Margaret Mary.—From the age of nine, after having made her first Communion, "she was jealous only of those who were allowed to communicate with frequency."

Among the reasons which decided her to embrace the religious state "her chief happiness lay in the thought that she would be able to communicate frequently." "I have so great a longing for Communion," she wrote, "that even had I to walk barefoot through flames of fire, it seems to me that this would have cost me nothing in comparison with being deprived of that blessing." "She [the Superioress] caused me to miss Holy Communion, which was the severest suffering I had ever endured in my life. I should have preferred a hundred times to be condemned to death."

¹ Cros, S.J., "Vie de S. Jean Berchmans."

² These and other quotations are to be found in Tesnière's "Le Cœur de Jésus Christ," t. ii., p. 503.

Venerable Cottolengo.—"Were it permissible to communicate half a dozen times a day, we ought to do it. Only one Communion is allowed us. Then, let us take care not to omit it. As for myself, I could not bring myself to ask for less."

Application.—A longing for Holy Communion is the mark of a fervent soul, a valuable proof of the great benefit derived from it. "They who eat Me shall still hunger."¹

This mighty yearning of the Saints, the need they felt for this heavenly nourishment, in a manner confirms the fundamental law for its reception—namely, that it should, normally speaking, be received each day.

If we need to be forced, as it were, by our confessor to seat ourselves with frequency at the Holy Table, there is good reason to fear that our soul is in a feeble or sickly condition. But if, on the contrary, we experience a lively desire to receive Our Lord, if it is a great trial to us to be deprived of Him, then our soul is already in a fervent state. . . . We should foster that desire by means of spiritual Communion.

Let us go, then, to Jesus "as sick to the Physician of life, as blind seeking for light, as unclean to the Fountain of all purity, as needy to the King of heaven and earth" (Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas).

NOTE.

In the above connection, the question naturally arises concerning the rarity of Communion in the lives of certain Saints, notably in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The present work is not an historical study, and hence the reader is necessarily referred to specialist

¹ Ecclus. xxiv. 29.

publications. It must be admitted that the aforesaid problem has not had the light thrown upon it which it deserves. "It is a mystery to us," writes Dalgairns, "which we are hardly capable of solving."¹

We will confine ourselves to a few brief comments. These will suffice for answering the objections, should it be thought well to treat the question before the faithful.

1. The Saints are always people of their own times; they have been influenced by the general neglect of Communion belonging to their age.

2. Spiritual needs appear to have been less great; "in those days fewer obstacles beset the path to heaven" (Dalgairns, p. 283).

3. Even these Saints would have found in more frequent access to Holy Communion the mainspring of a still higher sanctity. "We may say, without failing in the respect due to him, that the holiest of all our Kings, St. Louis, would have reached a yet fuller growth in sanctity had he received the Body of Our Lord more frequently with the same dispositions."² How many souls there are who have failed to reach that degree of holiness to which they were called through not having made a freer use of Communion!

4. All the same, the fact remains that most of the Saints whom this period produced communicated more often than their contemporaries, and it was just in those times that Our Lord, by protesting, even to the point of causing miracles, against the neglect of His Sacrament, reminded everyone that frequent Communion is the ordinary means of progress in the Divine life.

The observation has been made that if, instead of

¹ "Holy Communion," vol. i., p. 283, edition 1864.

² Coubé, "Weekly Communion," 2nd edition, p. 98.

only considering the Saints, we examine the period itself and the entire Middle Ages, we shall see that, although Communion may have been rare, the number of communicants was enormous. At the same time, the people of the Middle Ages, having a livelier faith, made good use of the other aids to the supernatural life.

It would probably be truer to say that it is a mistake to represent that period as showing forth the Christian life in its ideal perfection; and that its having ended so disastrously is mainly due to the neglect of the Eucharist—in fact, that “the Holy Spirit was ever wrestling to bring about a free use of the Sacraments, but was continually thwarted by the coldness and indifference of men.”¹

Reading.—Abbé Bellamy, “Les Effets de la Communion,” p. 350. 12mo. Paris: Retaux, 1900.

Abbé Lambert, “Allons à la Saint Table,” p. 140. 18mo. Œuvre S. Paul, 1 fr., in chap. 3. Les Saints nous le conseillent.

Magazine: *Le Très Saint Sacrement*. Fleurs Eucharistiques de la Vie des Saints, for 1898 and following years.

¹ Dalgairns, p. 285.

COMMUNION OF REPARATION.

1. IT is the cherished desire of Our Lord, the most ardent wish of His Sacred Heart, that all the faithful who are living by His life should receive Communion every day.¹ Consequently, we perform an act of love and gratitude towards Him by hearkening to His call.

Our Lord has chosen to supplement the manifestation of this His wish in the Gospels and through the Church, with a fresh promulgation. Holy Communion holds a leading place in the revelations of the Sacred Heart to Blessed Margaret Mary. In general, Our Lord calls for a return of love towards the Eucharist. "I have a burning thirst to be loved by men in the Most Holy Sacrament, and I find scarce anyone to slake it, according to My desire, by making Me some return of love;" "Behold this Heart which has so loved men, which has spared no sacrifice, to the point of exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to testify to them Its love. And in return I receive from the greater number only ingratitude, in irreverences and sacrileges, and in the tepidity and indifference which they show towards Me in that Sacrament of Love. This is more grievous to Me than all that I suffered during My Passion."

¹ Decree, "The desire of Jesus Christ . . . that the faithful," etc.

But amongst all acts of reparation to His outraged love, it is Communion that He asks for above all. He asks that it be received on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, and on the first Friday of each month.

To the confidant of His Sacred Heart He gives the following injunction: "First, thou shalt receive Me in the Blessed Sacrament as often as holy obedience allows thee, no matter what the humiliations and mortifications that befall thee in consequence." And again: "When I shall make known to thee that the Divine Justice is aroused against sinners, thou shalt come to receive Me in Holy Communion."

We are all of us anxious to secure for ourselves the benefit of the promises made to devotion in honour of the Sacred Heart, and hence to take up its chief practice. We will endeavour, then, to understand more clearly *why* it is that Communion is in truth the highest kind of reparation.

2. To repair means restoring to a thing its beauty, its original integrity—*e.g.*, a picture, a table, a dress. It means making good some injury done—*e.g.*, to honour, fortune, health. . . . A gift compensates for a theft, a token of affection cancels an ungrateful act, the respect of one son makes up for the rudeness of his brother.

In the case of the love due to Our Blessed Lord, the spirit of reparation leads us to offer acts of fervent love in place of the bad treatment of which He complains. This can be done best of all in Communion, which—far better than any other practice—

- A. Brings reparation to bear upon the point in which the outrage has been committed.
- B. It unites the Christian with the Great Atoner.
- C. It gives him an esteem and the strength for sacrifice.

A.

3. Jesus Christ, being personally present in the Eucharist, is attacked therein by all sins which outrage His Divinity and His character as Redeemer.

But let us confine our thoughts to those sins which directly attack Him in His Sacramental state. The more He has loved us in it, the more sensible is He to the wounds inflicted upon Him therein; the stupidity and ignorance of Catholics, who slight or despise the Divine gift . . . disobedience to the precepts of the Church relating to it . . . sacrileges and profanations originating in baseness, avarice, or hate. . . .

Without doubt, in the Garden of Olives, Our Saviour trembled with fear, and was filled with loathing, at the sight of the abandonment, coldness, and contempt of which He was to be the Victim under the Eucharistic species. "Of what avail," He had exclaimed by the mouth of the prophet, "such copious shedding of My Blood!"—*Quæ utilitas in sanguine meo!* The uselessness of the Eucharist for millions of baptized Christians is the cruel thrust which forces from Jesus in the Tabernacle that cry of anguish: "My soul is sorrowful unto death. O hearts slow to believe, in order for you to know how much I have suffered, you would need to realize how much I love you!"

Add to this the blasphemies of heresy and impiety, public and social crimes—worship forbidden, churches closed, processions banned—all those hindrances put by atheistic and persecuting Governments to the designs of the love of God.

If we would form some notion of the sorrow thus inflicted on the Heart of Jesus, we must represent to ourselves some mother who sees her child dying before her eyes because it refuses to take the nourish-

ment or remedy, that would certainly snatch it from death. . . . What numberless baptized souls die of inanition, albeit the Bread of Life is offered to them in plenty!

4. What shall we do to console our kind Master, and atone for so many disorders? We can do nothing better than offer Him fervent Communions, and multiply their number. There can be nothing better, because it is this He asks for; nothing better, because—

(a) *In our preparation, our faith . . .* will make amends for doubts and blasphemies; *our purity of conscience* will make up for the defilements of guilty hearts; *our eagerness*, at the cost of some sacrifice, will console Our Lord for heedless indolence.

(b) *In our thanksgiving*, our acts of adoration, thanksgiving, and love will compensate for coldness and contempt.

This is true of every Communion made in the state of grace, for it always involves such acts as these, however imperfect they may be as yet. But how much more fully will it be realized in a Communion expressly offered *for the purpose of reparation!* What a powerful stimulant we have here to devotion, to purity of conscience, to generosity; and how much we shall strive to increase the fervour and the number of these acts!

The heart of Jesus "cannot restrain within Itself the treasures It holds; It is impelled to scatter them abroad."¹ By communicating, we enable Him to confer blessings upon our souls, and so we take the

¹ Quotation from "A Message from the Sacred Heart to the heart of the Priest," found among the papers of a Marist Father who died in Rome, and printed by authority of the Master of the Apostolic Palace. It is now translated into many European languages, and has obtained a wide diffusion. English translation published by Angelus Co., Norwood. 2s. per 100.

place of those thankless ones who decline His invitation; we thereby repair the disorder, not merely of Communions badly made, but of Communions missed.

B.

5. These atoning acts of satisfaction and homage derive from Communion itself a superhuman merit, according to the principle that reparation depends for its value upon the dignity of the person making it. The sinner—that nonentity in revolt against Infinite Majesty—is therefore powerless to offer an atonement proportionate to his sin.

But the Christian who receives Communion, is he still nothing more than a mere man? “His misery is absorbed by the greatness of the Divine Host Who takes possession of his being. The food which he has eaten is not assimilated into his own substance like ordinary nourishment. ‘It is not I Who shall be changed into thee,’ Our Lord says to him, ‘but thou who shalt be transformed into Me; and I will share with thee My holiness, My merits, and My life. . . . The communicant may well exclaim: ‘I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me!’ At that time it is Jesus Who prays, adores, thanks, and loves within me. . . . All our faults vanish amidst the splendour of the atoning homage of Jesus Himself.”¹

6. To make these beautiful truths plainer by a simple argument. The Jesus within my heart is the same Who is on the altar at the time of the Holy Sacrifice, and Jesus on the altar is the Jesus hanging on the cross, and Jesus on the cross is the Divine Repairer in the final act of His immolation. At the moment of Holy Communion the Christian appro-

¹ Abbé Vaudon, “Évangile du Sacré Cœur.”

priates to himself the atonements of the Saviour, and his own become, as it were, absorbed. And to make this union all the closer Our Lord has made Himself food. At no other time, then, can our reparation be more efficacious.

C.

7. Yet if we would wish our reparation to be perfect, we must go to the length of accepting suffering, and even of seeking it. See how the Master teaches the practice to Blessed Margaret Mary: "Thou shalt offer Me to the Eternal Father . . . and thou shalt make no resistance to My will;" "I will that thou prostrate thyself at My feet after receiving Me, and make an *amende honorable* to My heart, offering to My Father the bloody sacrifice of the cross for that end, and also *your whole being*, in order to pay homage to Mine, and to repair the indignities of which this Heart is the object."

It is in the intimacy of Communion—who has not experienced it?—that Jesus bids us take upon our shoulders a portion of His Cross, to die to ourselves through a generous acceptance of suffering, and so supply, according to St. Paul's words, "what is wanting to His Passion," and pay off that portion of what the Church is required to pay for the ransom of the human race.

It is there that martyrs are fed with the "magic bread," as the persecutors called it, which enables them to overcome all torments and allurements; there that missionaries and Sisters of Charity find the secret source of their devotedness; and there that the humble and solid virtues of so many Christians in all ages have been fostered. One shudders to think what would happen if the tabernacles were closed, were it

only for a single year, against all the souls that live upon them. What would become of us without the Eucharist?

It is in Communion that Our Lord urges the soul which is already Christian to become still more so, and gives it the strength needed for this. To cease offending God, to multiply acts of sorrow for our own sins and those of our brethren, to inflict upon oneself positive penances, to renounce the pursuits of vanity, or the softnesses of sensuality, to accept without complaint the trials sent by Providence—all such holy deeds are suggested to the soul, and rendered possible, by Communion. It gives to the term “renunciation” its Gospel meaning, and sweetens the yoke we are called upon to bear.

8. We should try, therefore, to understand why Our Lord asks above all for Communions of Reparation, and apply ourselves to this work. By this means we shall console the heart of Jesus . . . help our neighbours . . . grow in holiness. By it we shall acquire a claim to the gratitude of Our Saviour: “I appoint thee the heiress of My Heart and of all Its treasures, for time and for eternity, suffering thee to make use of them according to thy wishes. I promise that only when My Heart shall lose Its power shalt thou lack help.”

Reading.—Tessière, “Le Cœur de Jésus Christ,” t. ii., pp. 39, 495, and 530.

CLOSING EXHORTATION OF THE TRIDUUM.

1. **Choice of Subject.**—The chief aim of the above series of instructions has been to enlighten the understanding, to produce an intelligent and solid conviction, and to remove doubts and prejudices.

It will be advisable to wind up with spirit and warmth, showing forth the love of the Heart of Jesus for our souls in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. One might also draw one's inspiration from the solemnity of the occasion, or the festival of the Church that might happen to occur.

2. **Recapitulation.**—Whatever be the subject chosen, it will be well to explain once more in a vigorous style the reasons for going to Communion, the right way of viewing our spiritual nourishment, and the numerous fruits which result from its daily reception. The expression of Don Bosco—*Tout est là* (The whole thing in a nutshell)—might supply a theme easily capable of development.

Then, the faithful should be reminded that the present solemnity, unlike others, is not designed in order to commemorate a Saint or a mystery, so that the memory of the same will only recur after the lapse of another twelvemonth; but, on the contrary, in order to give an impetus, and serve as the starting-

point, to as general and vigorous a movement as possible among the faithful children of the Church.

3. **A Practical Formula.**—One cannot reasonably say to all the faithful present indiscriminately: Receive Communion daily; but one *can* say: *Do not miss a single Communion through your own fault.*

4. Hence, the following line may be taken: No one here present should be unwilling to communicate at least once a month. Let the greater number communicate every Sunday. If there are some—and there *are* some—who are able to receive several times a week, let them do so. Let those who can, receive daily. Those, for instance, who already piously assist at Holy Mass during the week should also approach the Holy Table daily.

Those who feel themselves less convinced can at least *make a trial* of more frequent Communion.

You do not realize, brethren, the blessings of which you are defrauding yourselves by receiving too rarely. "Next to a sacrilegious Communion," said Mgr. de Ségur, "there is no greater disaster for a Christian than loss of Communion."

Those who either cannot, or will not as yet, adopt any fixed rule should make a *temporary* trial. However half-hearted it may be, the experience gained will teach them that Communion augments their power to resist temptation; it will give them, together with the wish to continue, a hope of final victory.

5. Then, brethren, *be generous.* Do not say to Our Lord: I don't want to be troubled with You; I don't want to come to You if it entails altering my habits getting up earlier, going through the chilly streets bearing a little ridicule. . . .

Be constant. What we have been preaching to you is not for one day only, but for always; it is the

permanent teaching of the Church. *Be constant*, for that is the best of all guarantees for your spiritual progress. "To-day's Communion will be like the first nourishment taken by a patient who has just pulled through a mortal crisis; that of to-morrow will revive his strength; that of the day after will begin to warm up his heart. The progress will be unbroken if the communicant perseveres in all humility and confidence, and takes pains with his preparation and thanksgiving."¹

Be like ushers, introducing others to the Holy Table. Numberless ill-informed or careless Christians, no doubt, will stand aloof from this movement. But do you, who have more light—you, especially, who have more leisure—second our efforts and preach more frequent Communion by kneeling at the Communion-rails. The lesson thus given will possess a twofold *eloquence*. For, first of all, people will be *surprised* at your constancy, and, when giving an account of yourselves, you will be able to quote the *mot d'ordre* of the Church; next, people will *appreciate* your conduct, and will see that you are the better for communicating oftener. They will begin to say to themselves: We, too, shall be the better for doing the same.

6. It is not I who thus entreat you: it is Jesus Christ Himself. Of this there can be no doubt, after our considerations of these last few days.

If the bread that is used to sustain our bodies could become endowed with intelligence, and were able to speak to us, what would it say? "Take and eat me; suffer me to achieve the object of my existence." Our Lord is the "living Bread," intelligent and living. What does He say to us? "Take Me; eat Me; suffer

¹ Mgr. Gauthier, Bishop of Nevers, Pastoral, January, 1908.

Me to achieve the purpose for which I have made Myself present here.”

How bitter would be the grief of a mother who saw her child dying before her eyes because it refused to take the food or the medicine which would save it from death! Our Lord Jesus Christ has prepared for us a Bread of Life, an all-sufficing nourishment, a sovereign and universal remedy; yet so many souls know nothing of its virtue, and die of hunger in sight of this Divinely appointed table.¹ Will you inflict this sorrow upon the Heart of Jesus? Or will you not join in sparing It the grief caused to It by others?

Ah! if the tabernacle door were to open, and instead of hearing my poor voice you were to hear the voice of Jesus Christ Himself saying to you, “Come to Me; take and eat,” . . . which amongst you would dare to reply: “Lord, give these invitations to others. . . . Stay in Your tabernacle . . . I have no such frequent need of You”? . . . Then, brethren, do not reply by your acts as you would not venture to do by the words of your lips.

Consider here, in Our Lord's presence, and before you quit this church, the answer that you will make to Him.

7. On January 30, 1906, several islands in the Pacific Ocean were violently shaken by an earthquake. About ten o'clock the inhabitants of the island of Tumaco felt a tremendous shock, which lasted, in places, from seven to fifteen minutes. An hour later they beheld the ocean piling itself up mountain-high at the horizon and advancing upon the island. Terror now reached its climax.

¹ “Parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos qui tribulant me” (Ps. xxii. 5).—*T.*

At that moment the parish priest had a lofty inspiration. He went and took the Blessed Sacrament from the church, and, followed by a praying multitude, came on to the beach, and confronted the angry waves with the thrice-holy Host. The mountain of water was levelled at his feet!

A fresh water-spout appears on the horizon. The brave priest awaits it with unshaken confidence, and the angry billows expire a few yards from where he stands. By degrees the sea grows calm, and hymns of thanksgiving succeed to former cries of anguish.

Here, surely, we have an image of the present position of Pius X. In all directions we see the furious waves of impiety and of pagan morals surging up against the barque of the Church. True, that barque can never founder, yet the passengers in it may allow themselves to be engulfed. So he, too, takes from our tabernacles that Sacred Host to which we so often sing, *O Salutaris Hostia!* (O Saving Host!) and says to us: "Therein lies safety. Let each one of you become as a living ciborium, and he will stand unshaken amidst the assaults directed against his faith or against his virtue."

PART III.

AFTER THE TRIDUUM.

IT is not enough to set the movement towards Communion going; it must be *kept* going. The Triduum is an exceptional means available only once a year. One must labour unceasingly, or else routine, the old prejudices, and sloth, will soon sweep everything away.

We may here recall those very practical recommendations that are made to priests belonging to the Eucharistic League (see p. 20). It also seems useful to add a résumé of what zeal has already suggested, or of the steps that can be taken at all times for promoting daily Communion.

I. Means which concern the Priest Personally.

“Who shall persuade Christians to frequent the Holy Table if not the priest after God’s Heart, the confessor who is filled with the spirit of Jesus, and who in the performance of his ministry puts on the bowels of the mercy and goodness of his Divine Master?” (Mgr. Benzler, Bishop of Metz, Synodal address, April, 1908).

1. *Affiliation to the Priests' Eucharistic League.*¹

2. *Study of the decree and of subsequent documents.*

“Our theological education needs refreshing” (“La Communion fréq. et quotid.,” by Abbé Holemans, p. 11). “In this matter there is some need for the confessor to rid himself of certain prejudices, the result of our former training” (His Eminence Cardinal Mercier; cf. “Vie Diocésaine,” 1908, p. 265).

3. *Assiduous attendance in the confessional.*

“In parishes where the practice of approaching the Sacraments frequently does not exist, the only way of introducing it is for ourselves to offer our ministry to the faithful” (Mgr. Benzler, *ibid.*).

4. *Frequent preaching* (see author's “Devoirs des Prédicateurs et des Confesseurs,” Casterman, Tournai, 30 cents).

5. *Personal influence upon individuals* who are under our direction or who already attend daily Mass.

II. Prayer.

1. Circulate, and get people to recite, the “Prayer for the spread of Daily Communion.” It is the wish of His Holiness that this prayer should be recited at Church services and in homes.

2. Circulate the other *invocations* and *pious practices* in honour of the Blessed Sacrament *indulged by Pius X.*² We give a list of these below.

3. Earnestly recommend attendance at daily Mass.

4. Hold a celebration of the Month of the Sacred Heart. The most efficacious means devised by Divine wisdom for arousing the world and attracting souls

¹ See footnote, p. 20.

² One of these pious practices, suitable to all, is that of showing some *outward* sign of reverence when passing a building in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved: 100 days Ind. *toties quoties* (Pius X., June 28, 1908).

to the Holy Table is devotion to the Sacred Heart. This has been ably demonstrated by Rev. Father Lémus, O.M.I., in a pamphlet published May, 1908, on "The Month of the Sacred Heart and Frequent Communion." The method of keeping this month in families, colleges, and parishes is well explained in this publication (Librairie S. Paul, 6, Rue Cassette, Paris, 1 franc for ten copies).

5. Establishment of the *Apostleship of Prayer*, or League of Prayer and Zeal in Union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. One of its practices is the Communion of Reparation.

The Rev. Father Boubée, S.J., General Director of the Apostleship, pointed out to the Eucharistic Congress of London, 1908, that long before the publication of the decree this organization had led souls to the practice of daily Communion.¹

III. The Press.

N.B.—Under this heading the author gives various printed devices for spreading the use of daily Communion, which the translator gives in a slightly modified form, adapted to English-speaking races.—T.

1. *Printed sheets*, either in the form of public notices posted up in the church, or in the form of leaflets for free distribution, containing a *summary* of the Papal decree.

2. In some parts of Belgium—*e.g.*, at the famous shrine of Notre Dame de Hal—the posting up of a large notice, inviting the faithful to communicate at the Mass they were attending, or at least on Sundays, has been found by experience to act as an effective exhortation.

3. Tracts and leaflets on daily Communion. A

¹ "Messager du Sacré Cœur," November, 1908, p. 675.

certain number of these are to be found in the list of English publications at the beginning of this work (p. xxiv).

The box erected in many churches for the diffusion of C.T.S. literature will supply a ready-made means for exhibiting pamphlets and tracts bearing upon frequent and daily Communion.

4. The circulation of religious magazines wholly or partly devoted to Eucharistic subjects. For the sake of those who read French with ease, the following Belgian magazines may be mentioned: "La Sainte Eucharistie," Tournai, Casterman, 50 cents for the year, a popular review; "Le Petit Messager du Très Saint Sacrement" (in French and in Flemish), Bruxelles, 205 Chaussée de Wavre.

5. *Text of the Decree.*—This central document, which may be called the charter of our Eucharistic liberty, should be widely circulated among Catholic families.¹

At a Catholic Congress, Mgr. Delamaire, Bishop of Namur, announced that he would have the decree inserted in the diocesan catechism.

6. Guilds or associations for the circulation of Catholic literature, such as Catholic Reading Guilds, might help in circulating books, magazines, pamphlets, etc., on the Papal decrees.

IV. The Children.

See the special chapter on this subject, p. 123.

"Suggest to the minds of candidates for first Communion the opportunity they will have of receiving Communion frequently and even *daily*, from the morrow of the great day" (Letter of Cardinal Mercier, "Vie Diocésaine," 1908, p. 50).

In several places the custom has been introduced

¹ See "Acts and Decrees," on list, p. xxv.

for children to communicate the day after their first Communion in thanksgiving for it.

A zealous curate of the Diocese of Tournai read a thoughtful paper before the directors of a social organization for young people on "Weekly Confession as a Preparation for First Communion, especially during the Year immediately preceding it." The writer dwelt upon the ease with which this can be managed, and upon its advantages, all being directed towards frequent Communion:

"A child who possesses and values the state of grace will communicate frequently."

"If he acquires the habit of taking the trouble to secure the Sacraments every week, he will communicate frequently."

"If he takes pains over his confession, he will wish to keep up the practice of frequent Communion."

"If he obtains an abundant supply of God's grace, he will communicate frequently."¹

V. Organizations.

N.B.—The following ones are for laity. The Priests' Daily Communion League has already been referred to in an earlier part of the work.

1. FOR FRANCE—*Daily Communion League* ("Ligue de la Communion quotidienne").—This association is exclusively for men of all sorts and conditions, and receives as members those who pledge themselves to receive daily.² The pledge may be limited to a certain period at the choice of each. Application to be made

¹ See *Annales des Prêtres Adorateurs* for November, 1908, p. 378.

² It is well to notice, however, that there are some who, with all respect for organizers, and in heartiest sympathy with their general aim of promoting the decrees, nevertheless see serious reason for questioning the present expediency—at least, of eliciting such pledges. At the present stage of the movement, excess of regulation and methodizing might end by thwarting the excellent object in view.—T.

to: Secretary of the League, 6, Rue de la Dalbade, Toulouse, France.

2. FOR BELGIUM—*Eucharistic League* (“Ligue Eucharistique”).—Closely connected with the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, where the latter exists. The members undertake to communicate in a body at least once a month, and to do so individually still more frequently, and, as far as possible, every Sunday, or every day. Application to be made to: Maison Notre Dame du Travail, Fayt-lez-Manage, Belgium.

3. There is no better way of *overcoming* the difficulty arising from *timidity and human respect*, especially in the case of men, than the plan of communicating in groups.

VI. In the Parish.

We will borrow from the *Congress of Men-workers* connected with Catholic social action, held at Fayt (Belgium), September, 1907, some extracts from a paper read by M. l'Abbé Brohée, priest in charge at Gilly, upon the means of spreading Communion among societies of young men, and in parishes at industrial centres. These extremely practical remarks are for the most part capable of application to other associations, and in different surroundings.

The writer begins by testifying to the inadequacy of *monthly* Communion. “Yes,” he says, “we shall never obtain our end without frequent Communion. Our industrial towns teem with working men who, between the ages of twelve and fourteen or fifteen, have attended clubs, guilds, and monthly Communion, but who, at the age when the passions are rampant, have thrown it all up. And why? Because the remedy given to them was insufficient. Many more

would have persevered had they been trained to frequent Communion. Yet no one may throw a stone at our predecessors, for they had not seen the decree of Pius X. on frequent Communion. But now, if we were to fail in courage and daring, if we did not strive with all our might to establish frequent Communion, we should have to take to ourselves the words of Jesus: ‘Si non venissem, et locutus fuisset eis, peccatum non haberent: nunc autem excusationem non habent de peccato suo.’¹

“*How are we to succeed,*” he adds, “in establishing more frequent Communion?”

“(a) The director must himself be *deeply convinced* of the need of bringing his young people to the practice of frequent Communion in order that they may be kept from mortal sin. He should also be persuaded that a child is not naturally averse to frequent Communion; that it will usually follow advice given; and that, in general, as regards children, obstacles will not come from themselves, but more often from the side of their parents.²

“(b) In this connection, the director should *speak often* about frequent Communion at catechism. The direct result of this will be that the young people attending catechetical instructions will of their own accord approach Holy Communion every week. That has been proved by experience.

“(c) Exhort often, very often, to the use of frequent Communion *at gatherings of the whole congregation*. If the sermons are not always preached expressly upon this subject, at all events let all favourable opportunities for so doing be eagerly seized, for any

¹ John xv. 22: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned; but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

² See “Parents and Communions of Children” (Sands and Co., Id.), by Translator.

sermon on the Eucharist will easily lend itself to this purpose—*e.g.*, on the Mass, the Real Presence, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, method of Communion, etc.

“(d) *The personal influence* of the director is also needed. He should influence the children by taking them one by one : asking them to receive every week ; listening to their objections in order to answer them with care ; inspiring them with confidence. Such action of the director, backed, of course, by the still more important influence of the confessor, will conduce greatly towards perseverance in the future.

“(e) Some have recommended the establishment of the Communion of Reparation for the sins committed in factories, in the streets, and even in schools. And, no doubt, the motive of zeal supplies a powerful stimulus to more frequent Communion.

“(f) *The example of a small band* of people receiving regularly every week will form the best of sermons ; nothing is so contagious as example, particularly among the young. One might also discreetly enlist the personal zeal of the more exemplary ones in the task of drawing one or other of their companions to frequent Communion.

“(g) *The day-scholars* in our colleges, and also in the schools conducted by Brothers, might set the example of frequent Communion.

“(h) The influence brought to bear during days of recollection, or in closed retreats, should be directed towards frequent Communion.

“I trust, gentlemen, that I may have succeeded in communicating to you my conviction that the execution of this decree of His Holiness Pius X. can be realized not in our colleges only, or by a few devout persons scattered here and there in a parish, but that the decree can and ought to be gradually carried into

effect throughout whole congregations. I am intimately convinced that this is, for them, the source of the life of grace, of purity, of the spirit of prayer, of courage, and of perseverance.”

VII. Communion in a Workmen's Association.

The following is given by Père Lintelo as a practical example of the working of frequent Communion in an association (of St. Joseph) for working men at Arras, managed by M. l'Abbé E——, who gives his whole time to this undertaking.

The following table of statistics gives the results obtained as regards Communion up to February 10, 1908 :

Age of the Young Men.	Number of Men.	Communions.			
		Daily.	Several Times a Week.	Every Week.	Every Fortnight or Month.
22 years and over ...	18	4	5	9	—
From 16 to 22 ...	21	2	2	12	5
From 14 to 16 ...	23	—	2	5	16
Total ..	62	6	9	26	21

These figures show that, contrary to what usually happens, the young men in this association receive Communion more often as they grow older, and have gone through the training given to them.

By what means has so happy a result been achieved and does it continue to improve?

M. l'Abbé proceeds to describe these means :

1. From the moment he took up the work, he *did away with the monthly general Communion* hitherto in

use, because—amongst other drawbacks—it seemed to place a limit, and to suggest that this was the maximum of frequency to be desired for the majority.

2. *Every year* arrangements are made for sending all the young men of over fourteen years of age to a closed retreat given specially for them at St. Acheul, near Amiens. The object aimed at in this retreat is to lead them to find in Holy Communion the secret of all moral strength and of perseverance in good.

3. *Constant Personal Supervision.*—*Every day* the club is open, and the Rosary is said in common, followed by ten minutes' spiritual reading. During the recital of the Rosary, as well as at other times, the chaplain hears the confession of those who wish to come. Many make use of the opportunity, and come readily to get a little advice. The chaplain always takes note of their greater or lesser faithfulness to Communion.

4. After all, love of the Eucharist is a reward for devotion to Our Blessed Lady. The Rosary is held in such esteem by these men that many of them say the whole fifteen decades every day; almost all say at least five decades daily. The picture of Our Lady of Good Counsel is specially venerated, and Mary is constantly invoked under that title.

5. *Every month* the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in their chapel during the whole afternoon, and the children come to watch in batches. Several times a year their elders organize a night Adoration in their chapel.

Amongst *results* in the form of Christian living, of apostolic zeal, and of purity of life which have been notified to the author, and which he has had occasion to witness himself, is the following example of heroic generosity:

A certain workman, aged twenty-four, has to work

every night till 2 a.m.; he then retires to rest without touching food or drink, and each morning about 10 a.m. turns up for Holy Communion. He himself took the initiative in seeking for daily Communion, saying: "*The truth is, sir, that with Communion only once in eight days, one cannot hold up every day.*"

THE TRIDUUM AND FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION IN EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

1. WE have *an imperative duty to perform*. The terms of the decree, the words and acts of the Holy See which have followed it, leave no room for doubt. What the Pope desires for all educational establishments, and therefore still more for those in which the ground has already been prepared for it, is Holy Communion—not weekly, nor just for the steadier ones, but *daily* and, morally speaking, *for all*.

2. We must convince ourselves that there is nothing else we can do that will more effectually promote the good of the children. Without this conviction we shall be half-hearted and hesitating in putting the Pope's plan into execution.

Speaking *a priori*, we shall never produce Christians on any other system than that prescribed by Jesus Christ—that is to say, by maintaining the state of grace, and this not intermittingly, but as a *normal condition*. For this end it is indispensable to partake of the Bread of Life, as the Master declares, and, moreover, to receive it as nourishment conformably to the mind of its Author. Normally, this should be done daily. Unless we succeed in thus securing for our children an *unbroken* continuance in the state

of grace, we shall have accomplished nothing. We should then be trying to gather grapes from dead branches.

Treating the matter *from the point of view of results*, let us hear the testimony of college directors and of the students themselves,¹ and we shall be able to judge of the tree by its fruits.

“My boys live in the state of grace; there is no longer any shamefaced human respect about piety; a good spirit prevails among them. The spirit of self-sacrifice is taking root, and there are signs of many vocations” (see p. 93, first full paragraph). Such is the evidence of one Superior, and it does but represent that of many others. I do not think a single instance could be brought of a house where an impetus has been given to daily Communion and people have not been delighted with the changes wrought in souls.²

3. Our *zeal*, then, should be ardent. No sacrifice should seem too great, no means that will help towards this object should be neglected. Everything should be made to tend towards more frequent Communion—public instructions, Catechisms given in classes, spiritual direction and private advice, the reading of special publications on the subject.

In consequence of the natural inconstancy of children, and the efforts made by the Evil One, there will be a falling-off, instead of progress, unless the stimulus given at the beginning of the school year be once more applied in January. The confessor will have to bring home to each individual what has been

¹ The first are to be seen in Lambert's “*Régime Sauveur*”; the second in Cros, S.J., “*Enfants à la Sainte Table*.”

² [Nor is it necessary to cross the English Channel in order to find evidence of such noticeable results in schools. See also the testimony of Cardinal Mercier concerning schools in the Translator's Preface, p. ix.—*T.*]

said generally to all. The idea must be spread *by every means*, since the devil makes violent use of every expedient to stamp it out.

4. There must be *unanimity* in action, agreement amongst all concerned; otherwise it will be a case of “*unus ædificans, alius destruens*”—“one building up while another pulls down.” Away with unenlightened apostles who would forbid children access to Jesus! Away with the pharisees who would reproach Him for eating with sinners! Everyone—both masters and scholars—must understand and proclaim that imperfect Communion is not to be suppressed out of an anxiety to secure perfect ones; that in order to have an increase, or an abundance, of life, *one must first of all protect and sustain bare life itself*: that the remedy for the defects of children—as for those of everyone else—is not a decrease of Communion, but a multiplication of them, under the only conditions which the Church demands.¹ These practical considerations, which are of first importance for generalizing Communion among the young, will be found developed with a masterly hand in Père Cros’s “Children, Come to the Holy Table!”—a work equally combining sound theology with psychological knowledge of children. All priests should be thoroughly imbued with the teaching.

5. But the Communion of children does not relieve the *educator* of his duty. It accomplishes beforehand what he himself could not effect, and then hands on to him well-disposed hearts; and the good seed fostered in them by his care will bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. Ah! if we did but know the gift of God!

¹ [*i.e.*, the state of grace and a right intention, or right motive for receiving. See Note at the end of this chapter.—*T.*]

6. Two different methods have hitherto been adopted for putting daily Communion in a place of honour ("promoveatur") in houses of education. One word about each of these.

A. *Progressive Initiation*, depending at the start upon the more pious and older scholars, and carried on mainly through the confessional.

This plan is open to the objection that it does not respond to the vigorous character of the impulse given by the decree, and by the instructions to priests belonging to the Eucharistic League; that, moreover, it draws its inspiration from timid ideas, the remains of antiquated views.

Suffice it to point out that, in this plan, the task of confessors is made extremely difficult; they will not find the minds of penitents sufficiently prepared. It is impossible for them to give each penitent a whole course of instruction on the subject; they find themselves checkmated by timidity and human respect. In this way the more needy souls are not reached, and—as actual experience proves—the successes gained are inferior both in number and stability.

B. *A General Movement*, inaugurated at the start by a special sermon or, better, by an *Eucharistic Triduum* [or annual school retreat.--*T.*].¹

¹ Short retreats of three or four days, after the method of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, may, as a little thought will show, be directed towards the establishment of frequent and daily Communion, without any deviation from the Ignatian plan. The special matter of daily Communion can be dealt with in the conferences or considerations. Thus, the Eucharist is—after the Sacred Humanity of Christ (or on a level with it)—the first of all "creatures" to be used for attaining the end of man's creation. It is a means of preservation from sin, the sovereign remedy for venial sin, a short-cut to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, to self-conquest and acquisition of Christ-like virtues, etc. . . . The exercises would be the preparation for a fervent and more perfect use of frequent Communion, and Communion, in turn, will be the

This plan has twice been suggested by the Holy See. A methodical explanation of the reasons for going to Communion, of the economy of our supernatural life and its alimentation, followed by a precise refutation of current objections—this alone can beget an intelligent and lasting conviction capable of withstanding the pressure of ordinary difficulties. Only a general stirring up of the kind can give an impetus powerful enough for overcoming doubts and insuring a victory over human respect. Wherever the experiment has been tried—and it has been tried in very different, and even in apparently unpromising, circumstances—the results obtained have surpassed every expectation.

People dread a fiasco—a mere flash in the pan. This fear prevails chiefly amongst those who only know the plan from hearsay. Actual experience is all the other way. By the said plan alone is the movement established on its true basis: it alone affords real protection to the true liberty of the children, because these are freed thereby from the fetters of prejudices and of human respect. If confessors do their part in *sustaining* the movement thus begun, one soon witnesses astonishing results.

7. The following is the scheme of subjects which we have found most useful for College Triduums: two instructions are allotted to each day.

1st Day	} Desire of Our Lord and of the Church. } Special reasons in the case of young people.
2nd Day	
	} Necessary dispositions. } Answers to objections.
3rd Day	
	} Answers to objections. } The more abundant life.

means to perseverance in retreat resolutions suggested by the Meditations. The adoption of the practice would itself be the most precious of resolutions, safeguarding the others.

Thus, the first day puts the appeal for daily Communion on a sound doctrinal basis: the child will also be impressed by reasons which apply specially to his case. Why has so much importance been attached to refutation of objections? Because it enables one to drive the doctrine home in a vivid way, and to hark back to fundamental principles, while at the same time introducing practical suggestions. The preacher should keep in view the special forms in which a given objection presents itself to the youthful mind.

The last subject set down above may, of course, be exchanged for some other; but the discourse ought to wind up with the counsels given in the closing exhortation (p. 178). We should not fail, at this point, to insist once more upon liberty of conscience: "Do not allow yourselves to be dragged along by any external force, like trucks of goods all set in motion by a single locomotive. You ought each of you to have your own steam power within you. When your conscience says "Go," do so, even though you were the only one out of 500. If your conscience says "Stay," then stay, even though in this case, too, you were the only exception among 500.

8. *A point of great importance*, too often overlooked, is this: Care must be taken that—in the beginning, at least—Communion be received *literally* every day in the case of such young people as have some habit of sin to conquer. For this purpose it is important to afford them *every facility* for Confession,¹ and to impress upon them the reason why any interruption

¹ [Real "facilities" for Confession, in the case of young students, imply—besides physical and moral readiness on the part of confessors—the removal of all minute disciplinary formalities *for obtaining access* to the latter that are not absolutely necessary, and such as would make things trying to the young, or attract to them the curious notice of their companions.—T.]

of the saving treatment must be avoided. For, in the case of these unfortunate victims of passion, the missing of one Communion will often be attended by fresh falls, perhaps more numerous ones; then discouragement sets in, and the whole work has to be started afresh. On the contrary, if there be no gap in the use of the remedy, the latter will soon effect, if not an *immediately* radical cure, at all events so perceptible an improvement that the patient will become attached to a remedy which makes itself so beneficially felt. How many young people, thus healed, have become so devoted to Holy Communion that they declare they could not do without it!

9. *The right intention* is easily procurable by all. In spite of what is sometimes said, it appears, on the contrary, that there is no section of the faithful to whom its acquisition comes easier than to children. If they are pure they go to Jesus with all the ardour of their innocent souls; if they have fallen into sin, they grieve thereat and wish to amend—often with far greater sincerity than in maturer years. The smallest word from the priest will often stir the generous emotions of these young hearts.

Conclusion.—May we never deserve to have applied to us the lament of the prophet: *Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis.*¹

We must not be less in earnest than the Pope, *nor yet more prudent than he is.* The multiplication of Communions, with the minimum of dispositions exacted by the Church, *is of itself an element of progress.*

Let no one urge that the practice of frequent Communion is only to be obtained, and only pro-

¹ Lamentations of Jeremiah iv 4: "The little ones asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them."

duces wonderful results, among those children whose earliest education has been attended to with greatest care. "The works conducted by Venerable Benedict Cottolengo, and by that great servant of God, Dom Bosco, give back a peremptory answer to this plausible objection. But actual experience will prove its hollowness to anyone who will get children of a mediocre, inferior, or even of the lowest class, to practice Communion. The result will be substantially the same. In this matter, as in every other, man can and ought to second Divine action; but let human co-operation be what it may, it seems as nothing when one looks at results. Then the Divine element shines forth, and mere accidents of surroundings disappear from view."¹

[Facilities for Confession.²

It seems useful to enter further into practical detail concerning "facilities" for Confession in educational houses. The important point to notice is that, once daily Communion has been set on foot, it is not extra long hours of confessional duty that are needed, but the affording of *frequent opportunities* for Confession *during the week*, the times being clearly known by the young folk, so that any one of them who wishes can freely slip off to the confessor without hindrance or curious cross-questionings. The usual public "Confession-day" need not be abandoned. . . . It is useful as providing *ample* opportunities for the Confessions of all the scholars (or inmates), especially for the regular Confessions of non-communicants. But

¹ "Enfants à la Sainte Table," p. 354. The author gives instances taken from such unfavourable surroundings—pp. 370, 382, 393-9, 407, 419.

² By Translator.

it is highly desirable in the case of communicant—and therefore somewhat older—children to create an atmosphere of liberty as regards going to Confession. The very young ones, however, who have not yet become communicants, will need to be led more by the hand and trained to a due use of Sacraments. It may be said, by the way, that there is a good deal of foolish talk about “respect for the liberty of children.” An able and exemplary Bishop, however, has aptly defined *true* liberty “as the full opportunity for doing what one *ought* to desire.” Notoriously, children constantly desire what they ought *not*. A holy disregard for the free—but obviously ignorant and untutored—choices of the child is of the very essence of all real education and care for children, whether intellectual or moral. The champion of child liberty seems chiefly anxious about its protection when the *spiritual* nourishment and culture of the child is in question. As for its physical and secular mental culture, no theories prevent his disregarding the choice of the child as to what and how much and how frequently it shall eat or drink, what medicines it shall take, how it shall be clothed, in what weathers it shall go out, or what lessons it shall learn. The religious conscience of a child requires training also. We need to be at least as anxious that it should be rightly formed as to prevent the child developing a crooked spine, a hunched back, bandy legs, or growing up in the notion that butter is formed from the chrysalis, or that Euclid learnt geometry from our ancestors, the Angles.

So the child must be taught to use properly those ordinary means of grace—Confession and the “daily bread” of the Eucharist—and to experience that both are good for it, even though not *obligatory* under

pain of sin. For non-communicants, Confession once a month or once a fortnight would seem amply sufficient, albeit special cases might need more. But during time of preparation for First Communion they might be induced to confess every week, "in order to prepare *better* for Our Lord's first visit."

With regard to communicants, it seems most undesirable to adopt the "herding" process—*i.e.*, sending them *en masse* to the chapel "for Confession." This may foster in them the false notion that, for frequent or daily Communion, it is *necessary* to confess at least every week, even though they have nothing but "venials" to tell—a notion contradicted by the Papal decrees, by elementary theology, and, one may hope, by the instructions given in some adjoining classroom upon the limits of the precept of Confession. To prevent this, which might cause young *folk* to miss many Communion in holiday-time, or on leaving school, it seems far better that, at the public time for Confessions, they should have the option of some quiet occupation of little importance elsewhere (*e.g.*, letter-writing, voluntary study, reading, sewing, etc.), with full individual freedom to leave it for Confession, if they wish to go, being *at most* required *simply to notify* to the authority in charge that they are "going to the chapel." Supposing moderate zeal and a little planning, all the above suggestions could easily be carried out in larger establishments managed by priests, or in convent institutions having a resident chaplain, or, at least, one within easy reach and not burdened with other duties.

In the case of institutions or schools merely served with daily, or quasi-daily, Mass, and once a week with Confessions, it would still be easy to adopt the above suggestions as regards the fixed Confession day. It

would be more difficult to furnish the frequent extra opportunities referred to. Yet, given a reasonable hour for the time of daily Mass in accord with the customs of the country, and a priest who realizes the Pope's directions as to zeal in promoting daily Communion among the young, it should be quite possible *to attend the confessional for a short space before saying Mass* in order to pick up chance penitents. Upon some such arrangement may depend the *salvation* of some whose only hope of victory over a strong passion lies in *absolutely uninterrupted* use of daily Communion. (See author's remarks on this point, p. 199, No. 8.)

N.B.—In order, as far as possible, to remove all danger of occasioning unworthy Communions, those engaged in promoting daily Communion in closed communities, such as colleges and schools, etc., should make a point of carefully avoiding everything likely to impair the liberty of conscience of the young. From the fact that they live under minutious discipline, and are, at their time of life, more liable to be influenced by reverential fear of their instructors and by human respect, every form of *moral coercion*—and especially in the case of individuals—in the matter of Communions should be discreetly shunned. Our aim should be to give to their Eucharistic practice that freedom which constitutes its chief merit. The means for safeguarding liberty which the author suggests on p. 206, are equally applicable to houses of education. If these be adopted we shall have no cause for relaxing our efforts to train the young in the practice of daily Communion, or to abate that special earnestness in promoting it which is prescribed by Article VII. of the decree.

The main points to be attended to, for promoting daily Communion in educational establishments, may be summed up as follows :

(1) *Careful and repeated instruction*, both on Confession and daily Communion; solving difficulties of conscience connected with either Sacrament; also frequent allusion to daily Communion in sermons and instructions, in order to maintain fervour. (2) *Frequent facilities for Confession*, but without "herding" the young folk *en masse* to the confessional as a point of discipline. (3) *Avoidance of moral coercion*, a different thing to strong encouragement and fatherly advice; of all *invidious distinctions* between daily (or very frequent) communicants and others, whether in word or treatment; of reproaches for faults, *on*

the ground of the frequent Communion of the delinquent. (4) The encouragement of *private and spontaneous* (short) visits to the Blessed Sacrament at odd times in the day. (5) The *training of candidates for First Communion* in the idea of daily reception *from the very first*. This is, perhaps, the most important condition for firmly establishing a tradition of frequent Communion in any institution for the young. (6) *Unanimous direction on the part of confessors*, in suggesting and maintaining the practice.]

NOTE.

OMITTING ONE COMMUNION IN THE WEEK.

WE refer here to an abuse which some desire to maintain in spite of the decree. This abuse consists in advising all the faithful to abstain from Communion at least once in the week, and in *imposing* this abstention on religious communities and boarding-schools, either on the same day in the case of all persons living therein, or on different days.

One readily credits those who make this recommendation with good intentions, but in the humble opinion of the present writer this practice —

- (1) Is inspired by prejudices that have been condemned;
- (2) Appears contrary to the rules laid down in the decree;
- (3) Is hurtful to souls;
- (4) Can plead no good reason whatever in its favour.

1. The chief motive advanced is fear of *routine*. See the answers to this objection given above, p. 97.

2. The Church gives no one a commission to improve upon her legislation. She is not unaware of the alleged inconveniences which it is sought to prevent or remedy; and yet she says to every Christian of good-will, "Receive daily" without adding,

“Except on one day in the week”! The abuse is aggravated when one inflicts on a whole community an abstention which needs for its defence reasons peculiar to the individual case, and which, even so, will seldom be justified.

3. The Church forbids us to deprive souls, even for once, of a Communion that they could make in the state of grace and with a right intention.¹ To inflict this privation is to cause them incalculable harm, the loss of Sacramental graces, which are superior in value to their good works and act as most powerful incentives to those works.

4. Some have thought that a reason in favour of their practice was to be found in that decree which exempts from weekly Confession² those who receive Communion daily, even though they should miss it once or twice in the week. This passage in no way advises or approves abstention. It has only one scope—namely, to extend the privileges by means of which the Church encourages daily Communion even to those who, for one reason or another, whether sufficient or the reverse, have not succeeded in receiving literally every day.

Others have appealed to the liberty of souls, which they fancy to be better protected where the usage under discussion obtains. The reasons just set forth forbid their liberty being secured in this particular way. Happily, ways of guarding it are not wanting, and they are adopted with advantage in many communities. We may recall the chief ones—viz., giving the utmost facility possible for access to the confessor; not mixing up questions of external discipline with

¹ [Articles I. and V. of the decree.—*T.*]

² [*I.e.*, as a necessary condition for gaining plenary indulgences.—*T.*]

questions of conscience and frequentation of the Sacraments; avoiding all personal admonitions on the subject; never speaking of it in public, except to set forth the right doctrine, and training people who live together to exercise a like discretion; abstaining from all inequality of treatment between communicants and non-communicants; finally and chiefly, explaining with exactness the true rules of the Church concerning daily Communion.¹

¹ Another conceivable form of this abuse would be, if, *e.g.*, a whole religious community *freely agreed* not to receive Communion daily (though having ample opportunity), perhaps because their Rule, as handed down to them, supposed or prescribed a lesser degree of frequency. Now, given that this so-called *free* agreement were genuinely such, and that not *one* of the community had secretly been overawed by public opinion into consenting to it, the plan could not, of course, be regarded as an *imposition*. But it would none the less be an *evasion* of the decree. Even Rules framed by Saints—like their writings on the dispositions needed for frequent Communion—have to stand corrected by the successive rulings of the Holy See. Were these Saints still amongst us, they would be the first to proclaim this. Moreover, Article VIII. of the decree plainly prescribes that the “fixed days” for Communion assigned in religious “constitutions or calendars” are now to be “regarded as *directive* and not *preceptive*”; “the appointed number of Communions should be regarded as a *minimum*, and not as setting a *limit* to the devotion of the religious.” Furthermore, such a formal, corporate agreement would ill accord with the professed object of religious life—*viz.*, to *aim at perfection*. For it cannot be doubted but that it is more perfect (though not of precept) to follow the urgent counsels of Christ’s Vicar, couched in a “doctrinal and disciplinary” decree, than deliberately to enter into a corporate pact to neglect his advice that “all the faithful, of whatever state or condition,” should draw daily from this “fount of all sanctity” (“Secret” of Mass, July 31). This would be true of any body of persons aspiring to perfection, but it is exceptionally true of Religious Orders and Congregations in which the Holy Father desires frequent and daily Communion to be promoted “especially” (Article VI. of the decree). Were Sister N. N. to sweep the convent cloisters less frequently or thoroughly than had been urged upon her by her Superior, she would doubtless be taught to regard this as at least an imperfection. But when Pius X. speaks,

INDULGENCED EJACULATIONS.

My Lord and my God!

Seven years and 7 quarantines, if said looking at the Sacred Host, whether during the Elevation at Mass, or during Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; plenary indulgence once a *week* if recited each day (*Pius X.*, May 18, 1907).

Cor Jesu Eucharisticum, miserere nobis.

[*Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist, have mercy on us.*]

300 days *toties quoties* (*Pius X.*, December 20, 1907).

Jesus, my God, I adore Thee here present in the Sacrament of Thy love.

100 days *toties quoties*, if said while kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the Tabernacle.

“a greater” than the Superioress “is here.” The theory of the virtue of obedience does not alter merely because the Vicar of Christ happens to be in question. Again, it would hardly be less alien to the spirit of the decree if, *e.g.*, Superiors in convents abstained from Communion on certain days in the week “on principle,” by way of showing their communities that they were free to communicate or not. That cannot be called “promoting” daily Communion in religious houses, as the Pope expressly desires. The community may be supposed to know their Catechism and their Rule; or, if they do not, let them be properly instructed. They naturally look to Superiors for an example of perfection in other matters. Why should they not receive one, also, in this matter of compliance with the desires of the Canonical Head of all religious Orders? This kind of thing is quite unnecessary for the end in view—that of protecting liberty of soul. *Non tali auxilio. . . .* The effect of such devices is to perpetuate in more sensitive souls an unhealthy dread of daily Communion, and cause them to forfeit innumerable graces here, as well as a far richer crown in heaven hereafter. It is unlikely that members of a religious community will venture to use the right which the decree gives them if they see that their Superior studiously abstains from using it, however great may be their need of the daily Bread. Thus, while seeking to favour liberty in one direction, they would be prejudicing it somewhat in another.

Notre Dame du Très Saint Sacrement, priez pour nous.
[*Our Lady of the Most Holy Sacrament, pray for us.*]

300 days, if said before the Blessed Sacrament exposed (*Pius X., December 30, 1905*).

Prayer of Pius X. for the Spread of Daily Communion (300 days' Indulgence).

(See p. 17.)

Pious Practice.

An indulgence of 100 days *toties quoties* is granted to anyone making an *external act* of reverence on passing a building in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. (*Pius X., June 28, 1908*).

APPENDIX.¹

ROME'S "MOT D'ORDRE."

THIS French expression appears to have no precise equivalent in English. "Word of Command" would express too much; "Watchword" is far too vague. The expression is taken, as Père Lintelo shows us by quotation, from the presidential address delivered by the Papal Legate, Cardinal V. Vannutelli, at the Eucharistic Congress of Tournai, in 1906, the first held after the promulgation of the decree: *Sacra Tridentina Synodus*. "Mot d'Ordre," of course, is not intended to imply that Rome has now imposed a *precept* of frequent, or of daily Communion upon the Catholic conscience, under pain of sin. Still less, as is obvious, does Rome mean to supersede or weaken the obligation of Easter Communion. Nor need such weakening be feared. In fact, a general adoption of the "devout and salutary practice" of daily Communion would form the best of all securities for the fulfilment of the Paschal duty—just as devotion to daily Mass protects the Sunday duty, and the practice of daily prayers the grave duty of prayer.

What, then, is the force of this "mot d'ordre" of Rome—"Frequent and Daily Communion?"

Let us examine the point. Does the decree *Sacra*

¹ By Translator.

Tridentina oblige anyone to anything? For some irresponsible and anonymous pen has written concerning this weighty document, expressly issued by the Holy See as a "decree," that it is not a decree at all—since it commands nothing! The author's chapter bearing the above heading is, of course, mainly addressed to priests. And upon them, at least, the decree enjoins several things, though not upon priests only. At the Tournai Congress—the first held after the publication of the decree—the specially appointed Papal Legate, Cardinal V. Vannutelli (who, by the way, had himself signed the document), declared publicly: "This decree is both a doctrinal and a disciplinary one." Consequently, it regulates something in the sphere of doctrine, and enjoins something in the sphere of action or practice.

(a) **In the sphere of doctrine**, the decree affirms certain truths, and, by the very fact of doing so, indirectly imposes a duty—that of mentally accepting the truths affirmed. It does not indeed bind individual Catholics actually to practise frequent or daily Communion, under pain of sin. It ought not to be necessary to emphasize so plain a truth. But human nature is ever liable to extremes. Thus, the decree itself records the grotesque exaggerations in the past on the part of some who, justly alarmed at the evil fruits of anti-Eucharistic Jansenism, fell into the opposite extreme of representing daily Communion as a Divine precept. But, on the other hand, this tendency to exaggerate is by no means confined to advocates of the "salutary practice." It also reveals itself in those who, fighting shy, on one pretext or another, of the Pope's pressing invitations to the Holy Table, take refuge in the fanciful plea that priests who earnestly promote daily Communion, in obedience

to Article VI. of the decree, are equivalently foisting a new precept on the faithful. On the same principle, the zealous parish priest who actively promotes public night prayers in his church, or daily recitation in common of the Rosary in families, is creating a new precept. And, certainly, the rule of monthly Communion, so strongly impressed upon children of Mary and members of Guilds, ought, on the same grounds, to be regarded as tantamount to a precept.

There is a lack of proportion in all this. The truth lies between the two extremes. Neither the decree nor its promoter contemplates the use of daily Communion as an obligation. But the Papal pronouncement does, of its very nature, oblige us—ecclesiastics and laity—to give *real interior assent of the mind* to the teaching and principles of Eucharistic practice which it lays down, and consequently to abandon, as false, all spiritual theories which conflict with that teaching and with those principles, or which render either nugatory. As our author puts it: "If infallibility has not spoken, authority, at all events, has." It is unnecessary, in a work intended for priests, to deal with that too common delusion that infallible utterances are the only ones which claim the *inward* and *conscientious* submission of Catholics.

(b) **In the sphere of action**, too, the decree imposes several things. In Article V. confessors are told to beware of hindering anyone (*ne quemquam avertant*) from even daily reception of the Eucharist who receives in the state of grace and with a right intention. According to Article VI., priests—*i.e.*, "parish priests, confessors, and preachers, in accordance with the approved teaching of the Roman Catechism" (Part II., cap. 4, N. 60)—*are frequently and with much zeal to exhort* the faithful to this devout

and salutary practice. In Article VII. the practice is ordered to be promoted "especially" in "Religious Orders and Congregations of all kinds . . . in ecclesiastical seminaries, and in Christian establishments, of whatever kind, for the training of youth." Further, after the publication of the decree writers are ordered to abstain "from *contentious* controversies concerning the *dispositions requisite* for frequent and daily Communion." In the concluding sentence of the decree His Holiness is stated as having "further ordered" that "local ordinaries and regular prelates," in their reports concerning the state of their respective dioceses or institutes, should inform the Holy See *concerning the execution of the matters therein determined*. Here, then, we have not a few duties imposed by the said decree. We may sum up the matter thus: While the actual use of frequent and daily Communion is not enjoined, many other things are ordered for bringing about as widespread an adoption of that practice as possible among all classes of the faithful.

Yet, with regard even to actual practice, the decree, while giving no command, contains something far more pressing than a mere spiritual suggestion. It gives an *urgent* counsel—since repeated many times by the Holy See in various forms—to all the faithful, children communicants included, as the Answer of September 15, 1906, puts beyond all cavil. This, then, is no mere refinement of piety, to be indulged in by such as have a taste for it.

The issue at stake is nothing less than the *continuous maintenance* and *strengthening* of the spiritual life of grace within the individual soul, and hence in the Catholic Church. "This, then (*i.e.*, the Sacrament of the Eucharist), is the fount from which the spirit

of the supernatural life is diffused throughout the whole body of the Church.”¹

A man may, if he will, neglect the pressing advice of a physician who tells him never to go a single day without taking proper nourishment for his body. How eminently consoling it will be for him—and for his wife and family—when his health collapses, to be able to reflect that, after all, the doctor’s prescription was not a precept, but only expert medical advice! It would seem as though, in some quarters, this was the kind of cold comfort which people were preparing for themselves and for others. It is akin to that taken by the priest in the story, who, when visited by his Bishop about the beginning of the year, remarked: “At all events, my lord, I have one consolation. Not a single sacrilege has been committed in my congregation during the last nine months.” “How can you know that?” asked the Bishop. “Because, since last Easter, not a soul among them has approached the Sacraments.”

Are we going to hold back, or adopt illogical half-measures, from a vague fear lest a wholesale and *active* promotion of daily Communion should lead incidentally to sacrilegious receptions? Let us be consistent and not have one principle for ourselves and another for our people. Is it usual to shrink from exhorting priests to say Mass daily, for fear lest some might celebrate unworthily? Or, is it only the laity who are called upon to treat the Eucharist with reverence? If so, then it would be better to cease wholly from urging our flocks to make any use of the Sacraments at all, or indeed of prayer, or even of the grace of God, lest some be guilty of grave abuses.

¹ Brief of Pius X., appointing Cardinal V. Vamutelli Papal Legate at the Westminster Eucharistic Congress, 1908.

But perhaps we only fear careless and indifferent Communion, and not sacrilegious ones? Still, let us be consistent. The following passage from Prior Frassinetti of Santa Sabina—whose brave writings are so well known to Catholic priests—is much to the point: “Here is another objection which, in the view of certain spiritual directors of our day, should be regarded as a very serious one. If frequent, and still more daily, Communion were allowed to imperfect Christians, the consequence would be that these would lose that deep reverence which is due to the Most Holy Sacrament. Lacking in fervour as they are—so runs the usual argument—they will communicate with much distraction and carelessness if they approach frequently and even daily; and this would be contrary to the respect owing to the Most Holy Sacrament. Consequently—such is the conclusion people would draw—in order to prevent this lack of reverence, one ought to allow Holy Communion but seldom to imperfect Christians.

“Now, in the first place, it appears a most remarkable fact that this fear should not have entered the minds of the Fathers of the Church, who, as we have observed, are the most reliable masters of the spiritual life. These advised daily Communion to all Christians. They ought to have paid great attention to this alleged danger, and to have spoken of it most emphatically as a practical point. Yet, on the contrary, one finds no trace of any such fear in any one of the Fathers. They feared only one thing in the use of Communion—namely, sacrilege—and of this, according to the teaching of St. Paul, only those are guilty who receive in the state of mortal sin. Not one of the Fathers has said to imperfect Christians: ‘As for you, communicate less frequently, lest you fail in respect for the Most Holy Sacrament.’

“In the next place, I observe that this fear is not felt in regard to priests that are imperfect. I am one of these, and I know I have plenty of companions. I do not fear to shock the people by putting such a thing in print; for, as the people are well aware, there is no disguising the fact that among priests imperfect ones are to be found. Now, it is a fact that these imperfect priests are allowed to celebrate every day, without fear lest, owing to such frequency, they may come to fail in respect for the Blessed Sacrament. They would only be forbidden to celebrate if they were in mortal sin. Shall we, then, maintain that want of reverence is only to be feared in the laity who communicate, and not in the case of priests, who, in celebrating Mass, not merely communicate, but also renew the Sacrifice of the Cross in a mystic manner?”

“I should not like such great indulgence to be shown to priests, while, at the same time, people are fain to be so strict with laymen.”¹

There is, perhaps, an unsuspected depth of meaning in that passage of the decree in which we are instructed that Our Lord's purpose and desire in giving us the Eucharist was *not* chiefly “that the honour and reverence due to Our Lord might be safeguarded.” It would seem to refer to something more than His merely permitting us to receive Him fruitfully, even though soiled with venial sin and in very imperfect dispositions. Does it not, further, emphasize the intensity of His self-denying love in bestowing His Sacred Body and Blood, freely and upon all, though knowing to a Divine certainty that some would wickedly profane them by participating unworthily and to their own judgment? Yet not even this dread and certain foreknowledge could restrain His prodigality. He bore this new Sacramental Passion lest

¹ “Banquet de l'Amour Divin,” p. 115.

souls in grace should faint for want of their daily bread.

The Church, His Bride, fully sharing the counsels of her Bridegroom's Heart, would, like Him, press her children generally to the Banquet of His Flesh and Blood, though she, too, can hardly doubt but that, here and there, alas! some will disregard her solemn warning, and outrage the Master's hospitality by neglecting to provide themselves with the wedding garment of the state of grace. This danger has not been *created* by the decrees. It existed always from the moment Our Lord instituted His loving Sacrament. But if greatly increased stores of Sacramental grace count for anything, those who constantly receive the Eucharist are less likely than others to be guilty of heinous sacrilege.

By all means let us be wise and prudent in our *methods* of promotion. In dealing with individuals, let us studiously avoid all reasonable appearance of moral coercion such as might trench seriously upon liberty of conscience, and work disastrous results, more especially when dealing with the young; avoid, also, the making of distinctions and, still more, invidious comparisons in public between those who receive daily and those who do not. But let us not take for our model that not unfamiliar type of person who is so fearfully impressed with the need to act discreetly that he never comes to the point of acting at all.

The attitude prescribed to priests by the Holy See in Article VI. of the decree is not one of more or less timid toleration. They are zealously to *lead* the movement towards Frequent and Daily Communion, and not merely to *follow* it.

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THE END

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The Eucharistic triduum.	.L5

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